

# JANUARY 2016

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD JANUARY 25TH TO JANUARY 31ST, 2016*

## **POVERTY DEFINED AS PAUPERISM**

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, January 25th, 2016

SAJID AMIN JAVED

AS the tide of millennial euphoria and confidence about the infinite march of growth and development has lost steam, the new target is called Sustainable Development Goals.

Interestingly, the Post-2015 Agenda coincides with two very significant events. The SDGs replace the MDGs and the Nobel Prize of Economics goes to Angus Deaton for his work on poverty, bringing poverty and inequality back to the global debates more forcefully.

The SDGs put a special emphasis on ending poverty (in all forms) and inequality across and within countries. The SDGs are all noble causes but the contention remains whether these goals are sufficiently mapping the problems and are effectively designed to resolve poverty issues while the inequality across the globe is widening. Productivity levels across developing and developed world diverge, deepening the divide biased against poor countries.

The contention here is: why did the poverty alleviation efforts not yield any significant impact so far? Pakistan fared badly on all MDGs. According to the World Bank the poverty head count ratio stood at 21pc with \$1.25 poverty line.

Pushing poverty line to \$2 daily makes 60pc of population poor. And if the multidimensional poverty is taken as a measuring device, results can be more alarming with MPI of 0.230. According to IFPRI's release on hunger, every 4th person faces hunger and Pakistan joins Ethiopia with 2015 GHI 33.9. Can IFPRI's GHI awake us? There is a need first to diagnose the prognosis of poverty doctors, their prescription and then see what could be done to turn this tide.

The public sector always missed a systematic poverty reducing policy and mostly tried random projects/programmes to curb poverty levels down. The public sector took the back seat and shifted the burden of reducing poverty on to the private sector. The public sector is running three major poverty alleviation programmes against about 50 for the private sector.

Of the tools of reducing poverty, microfinance remains the most used, covering about 3m active borrowers (56.5pc are female). These projects/programmes, owing to faulty design, never reached the 'most-in-need' as the criterion for beneficiaries is the ability to pay back the loans which results in exclusion of the most vulnerable.

Also, the definition of poverty has been reduced to pauperism wherein providing relief equals alleviating the poverty. The central objective is restricted to provide the 'aid' in cash or kind at a fixed rate to the selected households for some fixed time, ignoring sustainable exit. It creates dependency and does not build any assets/resources on which the households can rely once they exit from the relief package.

Then there is the issue in skill which may appear to be a sustainable way to get the vulnerable households out of the poverty clutches. But the programmes have some serious flaws. Primarily, the trainings are geared to serve the informal sector of the economy which only leads to the employment in elementary occupations marked by lower level wages, poor working conditions, overstretched working hours and insecure job contracts.

This, in turn, leaves poverty levels unaffected. Once the training is over, the individuals are left at the mercy of job market with no assurance of jobs.

It is argued that the most effective tool to end the poverty in a sustainable way are: good health and education. The failure of the public sector to provide equitable access to health and education has created space for the third mode of poverty reduction intervention.

The NGOs appear to be the most promising approach to end poverty. But the limited resources of the private sector may leave it ineffective in terms of the ratio of the deprived which can be reached with these programmes (bear in mind that 124m (61.9pc) are poor at \$2/day).

Alternatively, the attempt to reach too many people at the same time ends up with very meagre resources provided per individual/household. However, private sector-run projects and programmes end with very insignificant impact on poverty levels. Also the education programmes are primarily restricted to the 'universal primary education' which, given the labour market structure, can only lead to elementary occupations.

Finally, the scope of opaque zakat programme has always been very limited in terms of coverage and the average number of beneficiaries hovers around 1m. Interestingly, the number of poor covered under zakat decreased to 1.04m in 2011-12 from 1.54m in 2010-11.

Common to all these interventions is the fact that, all the poverty alleviation programmes, in general, focused on the individual households and neglected building assets/resources at community level which might yield sustainable resources after the poverty project exits. For example, skill development trainings in informal sector, without coordination with industries will leave the poor trapped in the poverty. No programme (especially microfinance) is catering the needs of the people below poverty line.

We need to develop poverty alleviation programmes with human concerns and not with commercial considerations.

For successful interventions, programmes need to be tailored to local context as socio-cultural settings and physical endowments while the availability of suitable enterprise varies across the country.

Rural poverty in Punjab and Sindh could have different reasons from poverty present in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Similarly the treatment of it would require different strategies and indigenous models.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1235127/poverty-defined-as-pauperism>

#### NEED FOR A NEW ECONOMIC MODEL

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, January 25th, 2016

MUSTAFA TALPUR

OVER the last three decades, many Asian countries have created new wealth and prospered but on the flip side, the newly created wealth, prosperity and opportunities are not equally shared amidst plenty.

The rising inequality is a major challenge for building an inclusive Asia, which is currently leaving behind workers and peasants trapped in poverty. And quite often the engine behind the very growth marginalises them.

The inequality in Asia increased about 18pc between the mid-1990s to the late 2000s and 1.6bn people continue to live on less than \$2/day. Last year Oxfam research revealed that 240m people in Asia could have escaped poverty, had inequality not increased from 1990 level.

When the world's billionaires, political elite and corporate gurus had gathered in Davos last week to reaffirm their belief in neo-liberal economic policies, they should have instead have reviewed these policies which can be partly blamed for the children dying due to hunger and malnutrition in the deserts of Pakistan.

Instead of creating an economy that works for the prosperity of all, for future generations, and for the planet, the current neo-liberal market-led model powered by World Economic Forum members has instead created an economy for the benefit of just 1pc of the world population.

Workers are capturing less of the gains from economic growth where the capital consistently grows faster than the rate at which the economies have been growing.

Tax avoidance by the rich and the reduced taxes on capital gains have further added to the returns of the wealthy and denied the government revenues necessary to fund public services.

The second important cause for rising inequality is linked to democratic failure. Wealth is used to manipulate the political rules of the game which undermines the basic democratic principles. Democracies are being made to work for a few rather than all.

Here are few facts that how rich and the rest live and share wealth in Pakistan and how the future looks like for the people at the bottom of income ladder.

Firstly, two-thirds of rural households in Sindh and almost every second rural household in Punjab are landless till today. Wide disparity in ownership of rural assets, mainly land, has caused widespread rural poverty and has helped a few to control politics while keeping the majority as voiceless subjects.

Secondly, the share of industry and services has gradually increased and spurred urbanisation. However, urban prosperity is not equitably shared; fisher-folk communities at the coast of Karachi drink polluted water and are denied basic services.

A year ago top 20pc of the people took 61pc of monthly income compared to 3.45pc by the bottom 20pc.

Thirdly, the people living without land in villages or surviving below minimum wage in urban areas could have escaped poverty had there been progressive redistribution policies and adequate social spending.

The neoliberalism has led to a drastic cut in social spending. And those affected are none other than people at the bottom, which reduces their chance to leap out of poverty.

Lastly, there is no dispute over the regressive tax nature. Not only it puts a heavy burden on the poor through indirect taxation, but the major economic sectors such as agriculture and services find ways to escape direct taxation.

Ultimately, the poor end up paying for projects benefiting rich rather the affluent contributing their fair share. Limited fiscal space with low priority to human development is diminishing opportunities for those who heavily rely on public services for survival.

Tackling extreme inequality requires action on many fronts. Pakistan must build inclusive and sustainable economy: provide decent jobs with fair living wages; reduce gender employment and wage gap; invest in healthcare and education; promote economic empowerment of women; increase social protection expenditure; and address injustices in the ownership of assets such as land.

Among the most urgent actions on the 'to do' list must also be putting a stop to unfair taxation system. The question is whether the government will wake up and serve all its citizens rather a tiny minority of rich and influential.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1235117>

Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhry

TO ease the immense population pressure on the economy and the 6pc high rate of unemployment, engaging and supporting a potential mass of 95m plus youth in entrepreneurial activities may be the only solution.

The small and medium enterprises are a good source of low-cost employment creation. Interestingly, Japan spends around \$78 per capita, Korea \$70 and Turkey \$0.53 per capita for the development of SMEs in their respective countries.

However, spending for SMEs development in Pakistan has been only \$0.01 per capita, when analysed with respect to the resources provided by the government to the apex SME development organisations, according to a 2010 World Bank study.

To quote the Census of Economic Establishment 2005, out of the total countrywide 3.2m economic establishments, around 1.4m are located in rural areas as compared with 1.8m urban enterprises. The life of 70pc of our rural population directly or indirectly depends upon 44pc of economic establishments operating in rural areas. Rural entrepreneurship development, however, has not been given due attention.

Agro-based industry, dairy and livestock and horticulture have great potential to attract the young breed of potential entrepreneurs, if necessary support is provided to start small enterprises in their own regions/areas. This will discourage youth migrating to urban areas in search of jobs. Businesses with potentials in rural areas based on their indigenous resource must be prioritised and supported.

About 35pc post harvest losses in horticulture sector are reported mainly due to the lack of processing facilities. Small scale agro processing facilities like fruit and vegetable de-hydration, dairy farming, honey beekeeping, quail farming and sheep and goat farming are among the potential businesses which need focus for development.

Here too, Prime Minister Youth Business Loan Scheme (MYBL) may be utilised as an effective tool to promote regional entrepreneurship by promoting small businesses in rural areas. The investor can benefit from the Smeda's pre-feasibilities in a wide range of activities.

Smeda has prepared 85 business pre-feasibilities, both in English and Urdu languages to provide support to potential applicants. Important training videos on marketing, developing business plans and financial calculators have also been uploaded on Smeda's website.

So far around 6,500 beneficiaries of MYBHL have availed a total credit of Rs5.8bn

Higher education institutions should offer skills programmes that match the requirement of the rural industry and also helps the unemployed youth cohort to become self-employed. Establishing centres by HEIs to help young students to incubate their business ideas before they enter into the business world are rare. The universities also consider introducing entrepreneurship development courses at undergraduate level programmes which should be conducted by successful entrepreneurs.

Similarly, though the skills development institutions (SDIs) impart skills on different vocational trades, a majority of them are not demand-driven. During their stay at the SDIs they are not imparted business know-how skills, which leave a gaping hole in pushing them towards self-employment. Entrepreneurship development modules, both in Urdu and English languages, may be prepared and introduced to enable students to build upon their technical skills and become entrepreneurs.

Smeda offers a limited number of programmes for final year students of HEIs every year on the theme of 'Entrepreneurship as a Career Option.'

Credit access to formal bank finance seems to figure in as the most important issue hampering the growth of new business startups and business expansion. Most small businesses operate through self-financing or retained earnings.

SME financing still remains at a low of 5.86pc of the total credit off-take by the private sector. Investment by the government towards supporting entrepreneurship initiatives can yield phenomenal benefits for our economy.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1233701>

## SECRETARIAT FOR NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT

Dawn, January 19th, 2016

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Monday launched Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Secretariat in the planning and development department with an aim to improve the nutrition status of the province's population, especially of children and women.

The secretariat was launched with the support of Micronutrient Initiative (MI) to address the growing challenge of malnutrition among children.

The participants in the ceremony were given a detailed presentation about the deteriorating state of nutrition at all levels, besides suggestions to overcome the problem.

As per the presentation, currently Pakistan is facing a "silent crisis of malnutrition" that is amongst the worst in the world and the situation had not improved for decades.

Results from the 2011 National Nutrition Survey (NNS) indicated minimal change over the last decade in terms of core maternal and childhood nutrition indicators in the country.

Among children under five years of age, 43.7 percent were stunted (no growth in height) as compared to 41.6pc in 2001; 15.1pc were wasted (no growth in both weight, height) compared to 14.3pc in 2001 and 31.5pc were underweight compared to 42pc in 2001.

Similarly, Vitamin A status had also deteriorated and there had been little or no improvement in other micro-nutrients e.g. there is iron deficiency anemia among 61.9pc, Zinc deficiency 39.2pc and 40pc suffered from Vitamin D deficiency.

The only success story has been iodine status which improved nationally, according to the survey. Currently, 69.1pc of the households are using iodized salt as compared to only 17pc in 2001.

Punjab Labour and Human Resource Minister Raja Ashfaq Sarwar, speaking on the occasion, said nutrition had always been an ignored and less addressed subject.

He said the nutrition issue had been merged with the health in the last few decades despite the fact it had an independent entity, resulting in decrease in an allover decline in all nutrition indicators.

The minister suggested a SUN parliamentary network must also be created, saying the proposed forum should be informed about any updated on nutrition indicators and related statistics through workshops and meetings.

He reiterated that Fortification Initiatives, SUN Movement and Multi-sectoral Nutrition Strategy would play a vital role in improving the nutrition situation in the province.

Khawaja Imran Nazir, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, pledged his full support for any legislation to be introduced for mandatory food fortification programmes in Punjab to benefit the poorest of the poor in the province.

Dr Tausif Akhtar Janjua, the country director of the Micronutrient Initiative, highlighted the role of MI in addressing malnutrition in the country. He briefed the participants about the positive impact of universal salt iodisation, Vitamin A supplementation and upcoming project of wheat flour fortification.

He said in Pakistan 45pc of the children were stunted which was the third highest percentage in the world.

Three types — iron, iodine and protein energy — of malnutrition were responsible for 3-4pc of GDP loss in Pakistan in any given year, Mr Janjua said, adding , or (SUN), was a unique movement based on the principle that all people had a right to food and good nutrition.

“It unites people from governments, civil society, the United Nations, donors, businesses and researchers in a collective effort to improve nutrition.”

Aslam Shaheen, the chief nutrition, Planning Commission of Pakistan/ SUN Government Focal Point, elaborated the objectives of the movement and the improvement in nutrition indicators it had brought in different countries.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1233935/secretariat-for-nutrition-improvement>

## FOOTPRINTS: DEATH HAUNTS THARPARKAR, AGAIN

Dawn, January 19th, 2016

SAHER BALOCH

MITHI: Not many people are around as I make my way inside the Civil Hospital in Mithi. Once again, Thar is making the headlines as multiple deaths of newborns are being reported largely by the Sindhi-language news channels and newspapers. Unlike a year back, the hospital staff is quite defiant when asked about reports in the media regarding the growing death toll. The district newspapers are reporting 67 deaths across Thar, while the official figure given by the civil surgeon, Dr Iqbal Ahmed Bhurgri, speaks of 20 deaths that occurred in the first 16 days of January. The hospital staff in Mithi refuses to admit the toll even as three more deaths are reported by the spokesperson for the provincial health department on Jan 17.

Despite the contradictory figures, the question is why so many deaths occur in a short period of time every year. And why, after the initial ruckus, is Thar forgotten?

The answer lies in Mithi, which has been in the news for the past three years for various reasons. Topping the list of issues are the deaths of newborns. On entering Mithi, one can see that it has a long line of NGO offices. It is the headquarters of Tharparkar (which has a predominantly Hindu population) and is more developed than the other five talukas.

A senior paediatrician at the hospital, Dr Sahib Dino, says having a secondary-care hospital, with a paved road leading to Karachi, Mithi receives “a lot of referrals from Islamkot, Umerkot, Diplo and Nagarparkar”. These cases, he adds, involve prolonged labour, premature births and lack of neonatal care. “Apart from that, there are child marriages happening by the dozen, leading to unplanned and frequent pregnancies that result in sepsis in the mother’s womb. In most cases, it causes the death of the unborn child. If the child survives, his or her growth is stunted,” he explains.

A staff doctor says the children who are admitted to the ICU or nursery unit in Mithi have ailments as varied as pneumonia, diarrhoea, heart infections, diabetes and thalassaemia. “You name it and the children who are admitted here have that disease. We try our best to accommodate them and help, but there are times when the children don’t survive.”

A few blocks away from his office, Dr Bhurgri, who took over from another medical superintendent in March last year, is not happy with the rising death toll and grumbles constantly about the reportage. “We are a 174-bed hospital

and we get a budget for 74 of those beds. We recently got 13 incubators installed and yet we are referred to as killers in the newspapers,” he says, pointing to a leading newspaper’s front-page headline.

In another block, where the nursery unit for newborns is situated, 25-year-old Zohra stands outside with her husband Khaliq. Residents of Diplo, they travelled for hours to get their son treated at the hospital. Zohra says in her first three pregnancies the babies didn’t survive. “I have three children now and this one gets fits whenever I breastfeed him. This is the only hospital we know of,” she says in Sindhi. “The doctors helped us too,” she adds as an afterthought.

Grateful for the ‘help’ they are receiving at the hospital, Zohra asks me to come to the nursery unit where her child is being treated. A male nurse, however, refuses to let us in asking for a letter from the civil surgeon before shutting the door.

The CEO of Hisaar Foundation, Dr Sono Khangharani, says matters are getting aggravated by climatic changes. He says that between May and June several deaths were reported from heatstroke. Similarly, by the end of November and December last year, there was a cold wave for a week which caused multiple deaths.

“Sixteen hundred deaths have been recorded in the past three years. I’m not making this up. It is from the record of hospitals in the six districts of Tharparkar. Keeping in mind the seasonal calendar of Thar, the government should devise a yearly policy in which these deaths can be controlled. But so far the response of the government is reactive rather than aimed at better planning.”

He also points to the lack of crisis management. “There are very few Basic Health Units, and where there does exist a BHU it works only as a dispensary. The staff hands out a tablet with a receipt to the people from 10am till 2pm before referring them to another district. They have to come to the main districts anyway for treatment.”

As a solution to the persisting problems of Tharparkar, Dr Khangharani says: “Governance needs to get better. The timely release of the budget is necessary to keep overall development in the area going. Taking away medicines from the hospitals needs to stop. Often, medicines available in the markets are of no use. So, it is a matter of overall management, keeping the nutritional, maternal, and climatic issues of Thar in mind.”

Until these issues get fixed, the season of death, it seems, is set to continue in Thar.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1233906/footprints-death-haunts-tharparkar-again>

‘SINDH SPENDS ONLY 1% OF HEALTH BUDGET ON NUTRITION’

The Express Tribune, January 21st, 2016.

**KARACHI:** Sindh government spends only one per cent of its health budget on nutrition despite the malnutrition prevalent among the children in the province, said Sikander Brohi, the executive director of NGO Participatory Development Initiatives.

“Health comes at number four in budget allocation as the provincial government gives only 9.10 per cent share to this sector,” Brohi said, while sharing annual budget data in a seminar titled ‘Possibilities, Opportunities and Challenges for Implementation of Integrated Nutrition Strategy Sindh’.

The seminar was organised by the Save the Children and partners of the European Union-funded programme, Women and Children/Infants Improved Nutrition Sindh (EU WINS).

Criticising the budget mechanism, Brohi said that only 21 per cent is spent on development sector while the rest is spent on the non-development side. He said that Karachi has taken 43 projects out of the 93 running and new projects in the current budget. “Karachi’s share in the total development budget stands at 55.1 per cent,” he added. He said that urban centres get more attention by the government as compared to the rural areas. “The drought-affected districts of Tharparkar have received only one project,” he said. Dadu, Kashmore, Shikarpur, Tando Allahyar and Tando Mohammad Khan do not have even a single project, he added.

Dr Shehla Zaidi, the director of health policy and management programme of the Aga Khan University, said that underweight percentage in Sindh is 40.5 per cent, stunted, or low height for age, is 49.8 per cent and wasted, or low weight for height, is 17.5 per cent. “It needs immediate and aggressive attention of the government,” she added.

Dr Zaidi said that 53 per cent children in Sindh suffer from a vitamin A deficiency, 73 per cent children are anaemic, 42 per cent are deficient in vitamin D and 38 per cent have zinc deficiency.

Sharing political parties’ interests for nutrition support plans, Dr Zaidi said that Pakistan Peoples Party mentions them 14 times in its manifestos, Awami National Party twice while Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Muttahida Qaumi Movement never discussed the issue even a single time in their political manifestoes. “Political attention is always on hunger rather than malnutrition,” she added.

Dr Aamir Akram of the EU WINS shared prevalence of malnutrition projects in Shikarpur, Dadu, Thatta and Sujawal that has reduced almost five per cent malnutrition among children from 2013 to 2015.

Dr Shaikh Tanveer Ahmed, the chief executive of the Health and Nutrition Development Society (Hands), on behalf of the civil society, urged that social safety nets such as Baitul Maal, Zakat and the Benazir Income Support Programme need strong connections with targeted beneficiaries of nutrition.

“The impact of food insecurity and poverty alleviation needs to be strengthened through awareness of basic nutrition concepts, environmental hygiene and disease prevention,” suggested Dr Ahmed.

“Malnutrition is not an issue that could be tackled only by a ministry,” said Aslam Shaheed, the chief of nutrition, planning commission of Pakistan. Instead, he added, it needs a multi-sectoral approach.

Additional chief secretary Aijaz Ali Khan said that, “Sindh is aware of [the] nutrition issue.” He said that the provincial government was spending billions of rupees on nutrition programmes.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1031396/sorry-state-of-affairssindh-spends-only-1-of-health-budget-on-nutrition/>

## UN CHIEF ALARMED AT PROSPECTS OF RISING GLOBAL UNEMPLOYMENT

Dawn, January 22nd, 2016

UNITED NATIONS: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s spokesman said on Wednesday that projections for rising global unemployment over the next two years are “alarming” and the UN chief will keep pushing for job opportunities, especially for youth.

The comments from deputy spokesman Farhan Haq were in response to a new report from the UN labour agency projecting that the number of unemployed people will increase by nearly 2.3 million in 2016 and 1.1m in 2017 as a result of the global economic slowdown last year.

Haq said Ban has been raising the need for new jobs in discussions with business leaders and others at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland this week.

According to the report from the Geneva-based International Labour Organisation, the number of unemployed people reached 197.1m in 2015, nearly one million more than in 2014 and over 27m higher than before the global financial crisis in 2008, which ignited the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

The increase in jobseekers in 2015 occurred mainly in emerging and developing countries — and emerging economies are expected to see an increase in unemployment in the next two years, especially in Asia, Latin America and commodity-producing nations in the Mideast and Africa, the ILO report said.



The two emerging economies predicted to contribute the greatest numbers to unemployment rolls in the next two years are Brazil, adding 700,000 people, and China, adding 800,000 people, it said.

ILO Director-General Guy Ryder said Tuesday in Geneva that “the significant slowdown in emerging economies coupled with a sharp decline in commodity prices is having a dramatic effect on the world of work.”

He called for urgent action “to boost the number of decent work opportunities.” Otherwise, he warned, “we risk intensified social tensions.”

On a positive note, the ILO said unemployment has declined in developed countries including the United States and those in northern, southern and western Europe. It said most major developed economies “will see rates stabilize or continue to show modest improvements” in the next two years.

“In the United States, the unemployment rate is expected to dip below 5pc in 2016, reaching 4.7pc in 2017,” the report said.

But the report said “vulnerable employment” — poor jobs with low and highly volatile earnings and no benefits — “remains a pressing issue worldwide.”

“Vulnerable employment accounts for 1.5bn people, or over 46pc of total employment,” the report said. “In both southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over 70pc of workers are in vulnerable employment.”

In the coming years, the ILO said, vulnerable employment is expected to remain at around 46pc globally, and a major challenge will be in emerging economies where the number of vulnerable workers is projected to grow by some 25m over the next three years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1234478>

#### RISING FATALITIES: 6,333 CHILDREN ADMITTED AT CIVIL HOSPITAL, MITHI, IN 20 DAYS

The Express Tribune, January 22nd, 2016.

HYDERABAD / MITHI: The unofficial death toll of children in Tharparkar, blamed on the drought and lack of health facilities, has increased to 78 in three weeks, with nine more deaths reported on Thursday. The health authorities, however, puts the number at 30.

The official denial of the child mortality rate notwithstanding, official figures shared at a meeting in Tharparkar on Thursday revealed an even darker side of the situation. The Civil Hospital Mithi’s civil surgeon Iqbal Ahmed Bhurgari told the meeting’s participants that of the 22,438 people provided medical treatment at the hospital since January 1, 6,333 were children.

In the first 20 days of January 1,735 patients were admitted and 121 were referred to hospitals in Karachi and Hyderabad.

“But only 30 children have died so far this month due to illnesses like diarrhea, pneumonia and other health reasons,” he claimed. “The health department, along with non-profit organisations, is working day and night to control the deaths.”

Among the nine children who reportedly passed away on Thursday, six were newborns. Four of them, the children of Hameed Soomro, Muhammad Mithan, Bilawal Khokhar and Maqbool Nohrio, died at the Civil Hospital. The fifth death, of the three-day old son of Utam Meghwadh, occurred in the Seharh Khuee village.

One-month-old Hamesh Meghwadh died at the Civil Hospital, while one-year-old Mukhtaran Junejo and four-year-old Samina Rind died in their villages where they were getting treatment from private health practitioners. When

contacted by The Express Tribune Dr Bhurgari refuted claims that the deaths occurred and claimed that at least 40 children are being treated at the hospital. They were being provided the best possible assistance, he added.

The Peoples Primary Healthcare Initiative's (PPHI) official, Dr Suneel, said that 12,092 children have been treated since January 1 at the PPHI's health centres in Tharparkar. Tharparkar deputy commissioner Khuda Dino Shoro asked the health department to send teams of lady health workers to every village to disseminate healthcare awareness. "They should help the families realise that they should take their children to proper health facilities for the treatment," he urged.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1031928/rising-fatalities-6333-children-admitted-at-civil-hospital-mithi-in-20-days/>

GOVT EMPOWERING YOUTH TO BOOST DEVELOPMENT: PM  
Dawn, January 23rd, 2016

DAVOS (Switzerland): Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on Friday that his government was transforming its human capital into a driver for growth and development by empowering its youth and providing them loans to start business and generate employment.

In an audience with Queen Maxima of Netherlands at the World Economic Forum Congress Centre here, the prime minister said his government was working to provide the youth greater access to education, economic resources, and employment opportunities, to enable them to become equal partners in national economic development.

Queen Maxima said she was looking forward to her visit to Pakistan, her first to the country.

"I have heard that it is a wonderful country and I want to engage in Pakistan to the issues related to women in Pakistan. She said she would like to focus on private-public sector work in Small and Medium Enterprises and women empowerment."

She said she was convinced that the youth in Pakistan needed an entrepreneurial framework of Small and Medium Enterprises. "I intend to work with international financial institutions which have positive sentiments for Pakistan," she said.

The Queen appreciated initiatives of the prime minister for empowering the youth in Pakistan and said she looked forward to discussing these issues at all levels.

The prime minister said Small and Medium Enterprises was an area of primary focus for him and the one where his government had ensured gender parity.

He said enhanced focus on SMEs was part of his vision for Pakistan and said he wished to benefit from the successful model of Netherlands in this regard.

He said there had been an increase of 300 per cent in social inclusion layouts, and an increase of 100 per cent in public sector development programme.

He said stipends for the poor have been raised by 50 per cent besides a 50 per cent rise seen in the number of beneficiaries.

TURNAROUND: Professor Klaus Chairman of the World Economic Forum also met the prime minister at the WEF Congress Centre and lauded Pakistan's economic turnaround. He said the country had been undergoing a positive change since 2013.

Professor Schwab said: "I must say Mr Prime Minister that your country is doing a wonderful job.

“There was no hope in 2013, but we now hear from the business community and the world that there is a lot of change in Pakistan,” he added.

The prime minister mentioned the growing interest of foreign investors in country’s energy, telecom, infrastructure, urban development, agro-industry and textiles sectors.

Professor Schwab is the Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, the international organisation for public-private cooperation.

He founded the Forum in 1971 and believes that the management of a modern enterprise must serve not only shareholders but all stakeholders to achieve long-term growth and prosperity.

BIL WINTERS: Later, talking to Bill Winters, Group Chief Executive of Standard Chartered, who called on the prime minister on the sidelines of the meeting, Prime Minister Sharif said his government had complete faith in the private sector and its contribution in growth of national economy.

“We are facilitating the private sector through a liberal economic regime,” he added.

Bill Winters said the CPEC would attract the banking sector as with the initiation of the second phase of the project, a number of industrial and economic zones would be established. He said his bank had already started work in this regard.

He said: “Fast growth of Pakistan economy is one of the major attractions for foreign investors,” adding that his bank was investing in power, infrastructure, PIA and other sectors of economy.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1234867>

#### PAKISTAN MALNUTRITION CRISIS: WOMEN AND CHILDREN MOST VULNERABLE

The Express Tribune, January 23rd, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The government has taken different initiatives to address the issue of malnutrition among vulnerable segments, including women and children. According to health experts, Pakistan is currently facing a silent crisis of malnutrition that has not improved for decades. World Food Programme (WFP) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to provide a grant of \$422.78 million to Pakistan to supplement efforts to improve food and nutrition security and enhance capacity of institutions. The Punjab government also launched a Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) programme to address the issue of malnutrition.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1032709/pakistan-malnutrition-crisis-women-and-children-most-vulnerable>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD JANUARY 11TH TO JANUARY 17TH, 2016

#### USE OF FOOD AS WEAPON IS A WAR CRIME, SAYS UN CHIEF

Dawn, January 15th, 2016

BEIRUT: Trucks carrying humanitarian aid on Thursday entered a rebel-held town besieged by government troops for the second time this week, following reports of starvation, grave deprivation and illness among trapped residents which the UN chief described as a “war crime”.

“The operation, in which aid also entered two villages in northern Syria besieged by the rebels, is part of an effort to alleviate civilian suffering in cut-off areas of the war-torn country.

A convoy of 44 trucks from the UN World Food Programme, International Committee for the Red Cross and the Syrian Red Crescent had headed in the morning to the rebel-held town of Madaya from the Syrian capital, Damascus.

A similar aid convoy of 17 trucks drove to the villages of Foua and Kfarya, in the northern province of Idlib, which have been besieged by the Syrian rebels.

In the evening, six trucks entered Madaya, while three trucks entered Foua and Kfarya simultaneously, according to the UN-supported agreement.

Madaya, a former mountain resort near the Lebanon border, has been under siege for months by forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad. The trucks carry wheat, flour, cleaning materials and some medical supplies.

The Madaya convoy also included a nutritionist and health teams to assess the humanitarian situation, said Tarek Wheibi, spokesperson for the ICRC in Beirut.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on Thursday that those responsible for the deliberate starvation of Madaya's townspeople must face justice.

“The town has been the victim of deliberate starvation.

Let me be clear: the use of food as a weapon of war is a war crime. All sides, including the Syrian Government, which has the primary responsibility to protect Syrians — are committing atrocious acts prohibited under international humanitarian law,” he said in a speech before the UN General Assembly. “Combatants have showed complete and utter disregard for Madaya's people,” Ban added.

The UN has said that 400 people in Madaya are in need of immediate medical evacuation, but Ban asked what about those who would be left behind.

“They can eat today but they fear another stretch of months in destitution if the combatants renew the siege,” the UN chief warned. As of Thursday, there were no reports of any evacuations from the area. Among aid organizations entering Madaya are Care International and SOS Children's Village, an international organization dedicated to the care of orphaned, abandoned and other vulnerable children.

Abeer Pamuk, communications advisor for the group who traveled to Madaya on Thursday, said immediately on arrival in the town, they saw “an overwhelming amount of people, all were extremely skinny and very pale.

“Reports of starvation have drawn international attention to Madaya, where an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 people are thought to be trapped without food, electricity, and other basic supplies.

Officials who travelled to the town with the first aid convoy on Monday reported “heartbreaking” and nightmarish scenes they said were the worst they had seen in Syria.

In a statement UNICEF and WHO said Thursday that their teams met distressed and hungry children – some of them severely malnourished, along with adults in a similar condition during their visit Monday.

“The town's population of 40,000 is being served by only two doctors, with a limited capacity to save the lives of civilians.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1233030>

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# February 2016

**NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 22nd TO FEBRUARY 28th 2016**

## **PUNJAB MAIN BENEFICIARY OF YOUTH BUSINESS LOAN SCHEME**

Dawn, February 22nd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's Youth Business Loan scheme appears to be losing steam, mainly because of hitches at the National Bank of Pakistan — the lead institution assigned to implement the subsidised programme.

The programme, launched in 2013, seems to have an overwhelming focus on Punjab despite the original plan to extend loan broadly on the basis of provincial population.

According to the official record, there has been duplication of loan approvals and disbursements for individuals on the same national identification card numbers or without completion of formalities.

Sources said the NBP itself was least interested in extending fresh loans following the removal of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's daughter Maryam from the programme's top position.

In a written response, the NBP said that loan disbursements were being made on the basis of provincial share in the National Finance Commission and denied slowing down the scheme or duplication in approval of loans.

The prime minister and the finance minister had repeatedly stated that loans would be extended on the basis of provincial population and the government would pick up the difference of mark-up rates over 8 per cent in the beginning. The interest rate for borrowers was subsequently reduced to 6pc. This was also notified by the PM Office saying the "SBP will ensure that loans are broadly in conformity with provincial populations"

According to the official record, the first ballot was held in Islamabad on Feb 28, 2014, and 5,350 loans worth Rs5.2 billion were approved. Of this, 76.36pc (4,085) loans were given in Punjab, 12.5pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 6.4pc in Sindh, and less than 2pc each in AJK, Balochistan and Islamabad.

In the second ballot held on June 4, 2014, 5,099 loans worth Rs5.33bn were approved. Punjab got 77.64pc (3,959) loans of Rs4.1bn, KP 8.7pc, Sindh 7.04pc, AJK 2.41pc, Islamabad 1.67pc, Balochistan 1.18pc and Baltistan 1.18pc.

Interestingly, the NBP said the number of loan disbursements stood at 7,240 and amount of loans disbursed was Rs6.789bn with recovery rate of 96.5pc as of January 2016. However, in reply to another question, the bank claimed that it had approved more than 5,000 loans after the two ballots.

The NBP's record, however, revealed about 9.24pc of loan amounts to be in default or classified and number of such loans is 8.96pc. This meant that a number of borrowers did not come back for the second or third tranche and were found 'delinquent'.

The NBP said that strong controls were provided in the system to detect and stop any inter-role or intra-role duplication of both guarantors and applicants.

It said it did not have access to other bank's database to screen its applications for controlling duplication in real time, but such duplication could be detected through ECIB (electronic credit information bureau) of the SBP which is mandatorily updated by all member banks by the month-end. "At this point in time, all borrowers in NBP portfolio are distinct individuals without any duplication," it claimed.

Prima facie, this was not the case. For example, a customer from Mardan obtained Rs1.575 million from the NBP and Rs0.75m from the First Women Bank on the same CNIC number, address and profession.

The sources said one of the major reasons behind the non-processing of fresh applications was non-payment of dues to a software vendor (a software house) that provided the programme for loan processing. The NBP decided to develop

in-house software and assigned the job to a team, but this could not become fully functional despite being put in place in November last year.

The NBP, however, denied it saying it honoured all its commitments on time and as per terms of the agreement. The sources said that most of fresh applicants were being discouraged through delaying tactics and those with influential background were accepted and approved. The bank is required to process an application within 15 days, but it was taking 5-6 months in case of independent applicants.

The NBP said the central bank had done away with the requirement of ballots in September last year and applications were now approved without ballot subject to completion of pre-disbursement formalities.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241075>

#### FUNDS FOR BISP DOUBLED, SAYS MARVI

Dawn, February 22nd, 2016

GWADAR: Federal Minister of State and Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Marvi Memon has said that the government has doubled funds for the BISP to eliminate poverty from the country.

Speaking at a gathering of women beneficiaries in Gwadar on Sunday, she said the number of BISP beneficiaries in the Makran division had reached 26,545.

“The federal government wants to empower women by financially helping them through the BISP to help them become part of the mainstream,” Ms Memon said.

She said that the process of availing of the BISP facility was being simplified so that maximum number of women could benefit from the facility.

The minister said that the BISP had been running several projects to empower women across the country, especially in Balochistan, including patronising the Balochi embroidery and developing cottage industry.

She said that women beneficiaries whose BISP cards had become deactivated, could get them reactivated by presenting their ID cards to the BISP offices in their respective areas.

Balochistan Health Minister Mir Rehmat Saleh Baloch said that BISP had been proving helpful in eliminating poverty from the province.

He said that number of BISP beneficiaries in Balochistan should be increased, keeping in view backwardness and poverty in the area.

Gwadar District Council chairman Babo Gulab also spoke on the occasion and welcomed BISP efforts in the area.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241054>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 8th TO FEBRUARY 14th 2016

‘COMMERCE, TRADE STRATEGY TO HELP REDUCE POVERTY’

Recorder Report, February 09, 2016

The first-ever Commerce & Trade Strategy of Sindh developed after the 18th constitutional amendment will help to generate employment in commercial domains and will provide a strong foundation for effectively reducing poverty, developing market place outlook, attracting investments and boosting growth in line with the vision 2020.

This was stated by Iffat Malik, Additional Secretary, Industries and Commerce Department Sindh, while addressing a workshop for stakeholders’ consultation on the provincial strategy to promote commerce & trade in Sindh. The Provincial Secretary urged upon the stakeholders to come forward with their input and suggestions for strengthening the provincial government in developing a robust strategy on commercial governance with focus on skill and entrepreneurial development.

Aasim Tiwana, Director Policy Ministry of Commerce, in his key note address on the occasion, highlighted the importance of the provincial strategy based on continuous increase in commercial activity in all sectors of industry, agriculture, mining, services, and small and medium enterprises, particularly at a time when the economic survey, world-wide government indicators, world competitiveness index and international doing business surveys were clearly indicating to a decline in socio-economic conditions of Pakistan.

Tiwana in his presentation referred to the economic and social indicators and international rankings to emphasise that the economic and commercial potential of Sindh can be intensively exploited by capitalising on ports, nation-wide logistics, linkages on trade route, traditional items and handicrafts and improvement in the sector of agriculture, livestock, mining and small industries.

Earlier, Khawaja Muhammad Nauman, President, Employers' Federation of Pakistan, in his welcome address congratulated the Provincial Industries and Commerce Department for taking the major step towards formulating the first ever provincial strategy for promoting commercial governance and sharing the same with the stakeholders to seek their input before launching the strategy.

He stressed upon the need to focus on the concerns of skill development, employment generation, market regulations, productivity improvement and decent work programme while finalising the details of the provincial strategy and assured that the EFP will extend its full support to the initiative. Ahsanullah Khan, Syed Nazar Ali, Shahab Khan, Fujita, Mahgul & Fasihul Karim Siddiqi also spoke on the occasion. -PR

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-and-economy/189:pakistan/14520:commerce-trade-strategy-to-help-reduce-poverty/?date=2016-02-09>

## WORLD BANK COMMITTED TO TACKLING POVERTY: KIM

Dawn, February 11th, 2016

KARACHI: World Bank is committed to tackling the issues of extreme poverty and inequality, besides improving the lot of underprivileged people around the world, said WB Group President Jim Yong Kim.

At a discussion, organised at the Institute of Business Administration on Wednesday on "Social Innovation and Inclusion," Kim praised the role of emerging female entrepreneurs and said "youth are a great asset for Pakistan's development".

He assured the audience, comprising students, faculty members and female entrepreneurs that the WB would continue to support skill development and creation of quality jobs for youth and women.

"The number of young people in Pakistan is growing rapidly and so job creation is a priority and this is where the private sector can play a huge role," he said.

The address was streamed through video-link to students of around 75 universities in the country.

He declared that one of the goals being pursued by the World Bank is to tackle the issue of inequality around the world to lift the people out of poverty.

The World Bank President said that his organisation with some 188-member countries extends technical assistance and financing to enable them to take decisions to tackle their issues. He stressed that there was a need for coming up with solutions that work effectively. The bank, he stated, also makes available substantial financial assistance to the member countries to help meet their development needs.

The investment in people contributes to the real growth, especially in the realms of education and health, he said.

Jim Yong Kim said that there are some 2,000 PhDs at the World Bank who are engaged in solution of the problems faced by the people around the globe. Replying to a question, he said that for enhancing its power generation needs, Pakistan may turn to solar option as this would help provide electricity in the far-flung areas as well.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1238695>

## 70PC RURAL POPULATION IN JACOBABAD LIVES BELOW POVERTY LINE, PA TOLD

Dawn, February 13th, 2016

KARACHI: More than 70 per cent population in the rural area of Jacobabad district is living below the poverty line, according to a written reply provided to Sindh Assembly members by the planning and development department on Friday.

The information was supplied in response to a question asked by Pakistan Peoples Party legislator Fayyaz Butt during the question hour about the department.

The data further revealed that over 65 per cent of population in Tharparkar district, over 48 per cent of population in Shikarpur district and 45 per cent population in Kashmore district were living below the poverty line.

Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani, however, did not take up the PPP legislator's question on the grounds that it had been asked by a ruling party member.

Sindh Minister for Planning and Development Murad Ali Shah said in response to a question by Muttahida Qaumi Movement legislator Kamran Akhtar about development funds allocated to MPAs priority programme that no funds had been allocated for the purpose in the annual development programme 2014–15.

Mr Shah said in answer to a question by MQM legislator Heer Soho about the marble city and its status that the Board of Investment (BoI) was developing it on 300 acres along the Northern Bypass and its cost was Rs140 million. He said that it was an ongoing scheme and over Rs60 million had been spent on it so far and Rs15 million had been allocated for it in the current fiscal year. The marble city was being developed to facilitate the marble industry, he said.

MQM legislator Ashfaq Mangi raised the issue of encroachments on the land reserved for the scheme to which the minister said he would soon provide the information to the house after asking the BoI about it.

Pakistan Muslim League-Functional legislator Nusrat Sehar Abbasi raised question about the North Sindh Urban Service Corporation to which the minister admitted the organisation, which was set up to improve sanitation and solid waste collection in different towns of northern Sindh, was not satisfactory.

Speaker Durrani also added that the situation in the towns of northern Sindh including Larkana, Sukkur and Shikarpur where the organisation operated was pathetic. The minister said that its performance was being reviewed and appropriate action would be taken as soon as a report on its performance was received.

MQM's Moin Pirzada asked about the number of posts filled in the department between Jan 1, 2008 and March 15, 2013 against urban quota and the minister replied that 60 people had been appointed to posts ranging from BPS-17 to BPS-1 against the urban quota.

Responding to a question by Ms Abbasi about Sindh Coastal Communities Development Project the minister said that it was an over Rs3 billion project out of which over Rs2.5 billion were provided by the Asian Development Bank and was implemented in eight coastal talukas of Thatta and Badin districts.

Several link roads, water supply schemes, school buildings, toilets, fish ponds and rafts were developed and mangroves were planted on over 10,000 hectares under the project, he said.



PML-N legislator Sorath Thebo raised the issue of withering of mangrove plants planted under the project to which Sindh Minister Sikander Mandhro, who looked after the Coastal Development Authority (CDA), said the plants needed seawater to grow and when it did not reach the plantations the trees died down, but the dying ones were soon replaced by other saplings from the nurseries of Sindh forests department and CDA.

He said the mangrove forests were flourishing and anyone could witness them.

MQM legislators Irum Farooqui, Kamran Akhtar, Aisha Khatoon, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf legislator Seema Zia, and others also participated in the question hour.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1239129/70pc-rural-population-in-jacobabad-lives-below-poverty-line-pa-told>

#### OFFSETTING INFLATION: BISP STIPEND RAISED BY RS 67 FROM JULY 2015

Business Recorder, February 14, 2016

ZAHEER ABBASI

The government has decided to give a monthly increase of Rs 67 to the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiaries from July 2015 as compensation against the inflation. According to Finance Ministry announcement, the present government, according to the finance minister, is fully committed to protecting the most vulnerable segments of the society. The BISP beneficiary would now be getting Rs 1,567 monthly instead of Rs 1,500 and Rs 18,800 yearly instead of Rs 18,000.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar stated on Saturday that after consultations with the Prime Minister regarding increase in the stipend for BISP beneficiaries. The PM has decided to raise their amount in line with the increase in inflation during last year. The decision would contribute to mitigating the effect of inflation on the BISP beneficiaries, he added. The stipend at the enhanced rate of Rs 4,700 per beneficiary per quarter instead of Rs 4,500 per beneficiary would be payable with effect from July 1, 2015. The arrears would be paid along with the next instalment, the Finance Minister added. The Finance Division has already issued instructions to the BISP to ensure disbursement of quarterly stipend at the enhanced rate.

Finance Ministry maintained that for this purpose the annual allocation for BISP has been enhanced from Rs 40 billion to Rs 105 billion while the annual stipends have been enhanced from Rs 12,000 to Rs 18,000 during last two years. This has now further been increased to Rs 18,800 per beneficiary per annum.

The Finance Division has already issued instructions to BISP to ensure disbursement of quarterly stipend at the enhanced rate. Dar speaking at the launch of universal financial access initiative launched by the State Bank of Pakistan Tuesday, stated that cash transfer under the BISP will be increased from 5.4 million families to 5.6 million families by June 30, 2016.

<http://www.brecorder.com/market-data/stocks-a-bonds/0:/16307:offsetting-inflation-bisp-stipend-raised-by-rs-67-from-july-2015/?date=2016-02-14>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 1ST TO FEBRUARY 7TH 2016

##### INFANT MORTALITY: THE LOST CHILDREN OF THAR

The Express Tribune, February 2nd, 2016

For three-month-old Kavita's parents, the 200-kilometre journey from Lobar village to District Headquarters Hospital, Mithi, was one on which depended their infant's life. However, once they got there, the doctor on duty refused to admit their ailing daughter, pronouncing her dead on arrival.

This prompted members of the Bheel community, to which the bereaved parents belong, to protest against the hospital's administration. Kavita's father, Chetan, believes the delay in her treatment led to her death. Chetan says he is not the only one to have lost a child due to the negligence of doctors at the hospital. Hundreds of children in Thar have lost their lives because they were not provided timely medical attention.

Over 100 children have died in January alone, according to media reports. "The government is only relying on hospital data. There is no record of those who died in faraway villages," says Kathau Jani, a journalist based in Mithi. In fact, eight children were discharged from the hospital last week even though they were in critical condition. Of these eight children, four died on their way back home, he claims.

Government record shows 326 deaths in 2014 and 398 deaths of children under the age of five in 2015. Media reports and NGOs, however, put the death toll considerably higher: as much as 1,600 in three years.

According to a doctor at the hospital, children in critical condition are referred to hospitals in Karachi and Hyderabad. Sometimes, however, their parents refuse to oblige. He adds there are several instances of children dying on the way to the hospital or doctors refusing to take them in due to their critical condition. These doctors claim parents only bring their children to the hospital when nothing more can be done. "There is a need to prepare our colleagues as well," he, however, admits.

Geography has a significant role to play in delays in getting medical attention. Over 90% of Thar's people live in scattered villages. There are only six main cities in the district, with over 2,380 villages, according to official records. "The travelling cost from the village of Kasbo to Mithi is Rs6,000. How can a poor family afford such an expensive journey? questions Ejaz Bajeer, a local journalist.

Kavita's parents, too, could not afford to make the trek sans financial assistance, but a local NGO, Hands, provided them a car to take them to Mithi. "The price hike in essential medicines further restricts us from referring children to hospitals," explained Bajeer.

A report published in 2014 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs states limited access to health services and a severe drought has led to a 'nutrition crisis' in the region.

At present, there are only 21 specialists for Thar's population of 1.3 million and a two-room, 90-bed civil hospital in Mithi. There is, however, no child ward, let alone any children's hospital. According to the Mithi administration, there are 189 dispensaries in the region, of which 80 are dysfunctional.

Locals contest, however, the claims, saying even the remaining health facilities are out of order. They even claim to have a list of over 150 dispensaries that were shut down by the government and never reopened. Moreover, posts of around 300 doctors are lying vacant.

Dr Mohan Lal Khatri, the lone child specialist in Mithi, says other factors also feature significantly in Thar's abysmal child mortality rate. "A majority of married couples have an average of eight to ten children," he says, adding lack of hygiene is a major concern. "Since these are poor kids coming from poor families, they don't have the awareness to wash hands and remain clean."

According to him, other reasons include birth asphyxia, respiratory distress syndrome, pneumonia and delivery of babies through traditional birth attendants, which often results in neonatal sepsis and diarrhea.

Mithi Commissioner Shafiq Ahmad says efforts are under way to make health facilities functional again. "The geography of the area is the main hurdle in ensuring health facilities. It just isn't practically possible to extend such facilities at people's doorsteps."

Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah remains unnervingly nonchalant. "Problems exist everywhere – from Karachi to Kashmore and Tharparkar," he said at a recent news conference at CM House in Karachi. "But the way in which the government is being targeted is regrettable."

Shah's adviser Maula Bux Chandio also claimed the media was targeting Pakistan Peoples Party unfairly. "The government is only responsible for deaths that take place in the hospital. How can the government be responsible if someone dies far away in the sand dunes?"

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1038394/infant-mortality-the-lost-children-of-thar/>

## THAR SITUATION NOT AS BAD AS BEING REPORTED, CLAIMS SINDH GOVT

The Express Tribune, February 5th, 2016

KARACHI: During a debate on the Thar situation during Wednesday's Sindh Assembly session, opposition members held the government responsible for the children's deaths but the government, setting aside the allegations, claimed the situation in Sindh is better than Afghanistan and 25 other countries.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) minister Dr Sikandar Mandhro said that, out of a total 196 countries in the world, Pakistan stands at 26 in terms of infant mortality. "The Thar situation is not as bad as is being reported in the media," he said. "In Afghanistan around 115 children per 1,000 births lost their lives, as compared to Pakistan where this figure stands at 55," he said. "The situation in Thar is better, as this ratio stands at 35 deaths per 1,000 births," he claimed, adding that three children per 1,000 births die in Singapore and 10 in the US.

Dr Mandhro said the PPP government is now conducting a survey of women in reproductive age and has now appointed around 600 lady health workers to create awareness among these women about health issues, with the provision of basic health facilities.

Opposition leader Khawaja Izharul Hasan criticised the government's failure to mitigate the Thar issue and diverted the attention of the House towards the Rs700 billion budget, which according to him, has not been used to help the poor. "Can the PPP-led government tell us about one model union council in the province where they have provided all basic facilities?" he asked, adding that expired ORS packets were distributed among the poor and mobile ambulances were seen standing at the residence of a powerful PPP minister. "If it was wrong then why did you not issue a clarification?" asked Hasan, who came to the house with a bundle of newspaper clippings. "These reports have exposed the real face of the government."

The opposition leader claimed the Sindh government's budget is more than that of 48 countries but it allocates the funds only on paper. "Utilisation is zero as compared to the allocation of funds," he alleged.

"Those who are criticising the incumbent government have never even visited Thar," responded Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah. "You are commenting while sitting in Karachi. Have you ever seen Dahli Taluka of Thar?" he asked, pointing a finger at the opposition leader and his party members.

He claimed that the Sindh government has given more than 7,000 jobs to the people of Thar people, built 11,000 kilometres of roads and installed around 400 RO plants to provide potable water to the people. "We have signed various agreements of around \$2 billion investment for Thar and this figure will reach \$4 billion soon," he claimed, adding that the previous governments had ignored Thar but the PPP has now taken it up on their priority list.

The CM insisted that the death ratio in Thar has been reduced. "I assure you that one day all you people will appreciate our government for initiating the Thar coal project and other issues, which will compel people to visit this area," he claimed.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement's Syed Sardar Ahmed stressed the need to form a development committee comprising MPAs, area deputy commissioners and district council chairpersons to look after development scheme. He added that Sindh has abundant resources but does not consider strengthening its institutions.

Health Minister Jam Mahtab Dahar claimed his department had equipped all tehsil hospitals with basic facilities by providing incubators, lady doctors and gynecologists, as well as paramedics. "Before we came to power in 2008, there was not a single lady doctor in Thar. We have now changed the situation in entire Thar," he remarked.

Opposition parties slammed Sindh home minister Sohail Anwar Siyal for not giving proper answers to their questions during the assembly session. After his appointment, this was his first experience giving answers on the assembly floor. The home secretary, additional home secretary, prison IG and other officials of his department sitting in the officers' gallery tried to facilitate Siyal by sending notes but he could not respond properly.

“Why are these chits from the officer's gallery being given to him? Why is he himself not giving answers to our questions?” shouted Pakistan Muslim League – Functional MPA Nusrat Seher Abbasi. When he failed to understand the cross questions, the minister used the words “yes”, “no” and “fresh question” while replying to the opposition members queries.

The opposition members laughed at and taunted him, when he responded to a question with, “Around 65 vehicles were snatched from July 2012 to Dec 2012 and we have recovered 104 vehicles.”

He became so nervous that when MQM MPA Heer Ismail Sohu asked, “How is this possible? Total 65 vehicles have been snatched and police have recovered 104. I cannot understand this,” the home minister looked to the officer's gallery for help from his department officials, for which the opposition members criticised him greatly.

During the session, MQM MPA Dr Arshad Vohra, who has been nominated as deputy mayor of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation by the MQM, tendered his resignation from his provincial assembly seat. In his brief speech, Dr Vohra thanked his party chief for giving him the opportunity to serve as a provincial assembly member and nominating him for the post of deputy mayor. He also thanked his parliamentary party, the opposition and PPP members for extending cooperation in the assembly and lauded the speaker and deputy speaker's role in running the session. After his speech, he submitted his resignation to the Sindh Assembly secretary..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1040516/making-comparisons-thar-situation-not-as-bad-as-being-reported-claims-sindh-govt/>

## CJP WARNS GOVT TO TACKLE THAR SITUATION BEFORE JUDICIARY INTERVENES

Dawn, February 7th, 2016

HYDERABAD: Supreme Court Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali has said that the apex court always considers it seriously whether it is exceeding its suo motu jurisdiction. “It's an irony that bad governance is leading to issues like Thar in Sindh that is rich in resources. I hope that lest the judiciary should intervene, the government pays attention to the situation, tackle it and find out a solution.”

The chief justice was speaking at a gathering of lawyers late on Friday evening during his visit to the city to attend the annual dinner hosted by the High Court Bar Association (HCBA), Hyderabad. Sindh High Court Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, HCBA president Ghulamullah Chang and general secretary Ayaz Tunio also spoke at the gathering.

CJ Jamali concurred with Mr Chang's assertion that children including newborns were dying in Thar but the government was doing nothing. However, the chief justice made it clear that the “judiciary always keeps it in mind if it is going beyond its suo motu jurisdiction”.

“It is an irony that bad governance is leading to such problems in Sindh where resources abound,” he said, and expressed the hope that government would tackle the Thar issue and find a solution before the judiciary could consider it appropriate to intervene.

Mr Chang devoted much part of his speech to the issue of the death of a large number of babies and children due to aggravated food situation, malnourishment and unavailability of proper medical care. He also urged the CJP to appoint a commission to look into fake police encounters and the terms of ‘full fry’ and ‘half fry’ used by policemen for the degree of torture ordered by their officers to be applied while dealing with suspects.

The senior lawyer appealed to the CJP to give due consideration to the elevation of competent and eligible judges of the Sindh High Court.

The CJP said that he had taken certain initiatives to bring about an improvement in the working of the judiciary and made mention of appointment of 90 judges in the subordinate judiciary of the province in this regard. He held out the assurance that the appointments would be made on a 100 per cent merit basis.

“The administrative committee has given serious consideration to induction of lawyers as district judges,” he said, adding that judicial academies were being set up at the federal and provincial level and lawyers should derive maximum benefits from them,” he said. Bar representatives should also remain in touch with the academies to guide lawyers about the training, he said.

The CJP said he discouraged the trend of appointing retired judges in tribunals at the cost of practising lawyers. “Retired judges have played their innings. Instead of appointing them on a contract basis, lawyers should be appointed to head tribunals. They [lawyers] are competent enough and their appointment will enable them to demonstrate their potential,” he said.

CJ Jamali observed that working conditions in the judiciary had undergone a radical change. He gave a comparison between the past and present conditions. “A civil judge appointed after passing the competitive exam used to draw Rs550 per month in the past but now the salary has been raised to Rs100,000,” he said.

SHC Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah speaking at the gathering advised lawyers to maintain highest ethical and moral standards, observing that there was no short-cut to achievements. He named some of senior lawyers Syed Madad Ali Shah, Jhematmal Jethanand, Hidayatullah Abbasi and Ejaz Hakro who, he said, were there to guide budding lawyers.

He said that advocates should not breach the trust of their clients in their competence and sincerity. Lawyers should not give unethical advice ... a lawyer was doomed if he lost confidence of court, he said.

The CJ said that the Sindh High Court had taken measures to purge itself of ‘black sheep’ by removing certain judicial officers and was paying attention to ensuring an improvement in the conduct of court staff who, according to him, were drawing a salary three times higher than their counterparts in the executive.

Chief Justice Shah said he wanted disposal of cases in the lower judiciary within a year at the most.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1237827>

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## March 2016

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 28th TO APRIL 3rd 2016***

***LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: ‘POOR HAVE AS MUCH CLAIM ON KARACHI AS UPPER CLASSES’***

The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2016.

KARACHI: The poor have as much claim on Karachi as the middle or the upper classes, said Aquila Ismail, sister of late Perween Rehman, the former director of the Orangi Pilot Project.

More than 60% of the population resides in informal settlements in Karachi, she revealed.

She was speaking at an event titled 'Reclaiming Public Spaces' held at The Second Floor on Saturday. This was the first session of a series of talks organised by The Karachi Biennale Council. The First Karachi Biennale will be held in 2017.

Rehman believed that development did not require evicting people to construct big buildings or pavements, said the sister of the slain activist and social worker. Development must also ensure life, liberty and happiness for the poor, she added.

Around 50,000 apartments are lying vacant in the city. Yet, the poor have no space and end up settling in katchi abadis or other illegal settlements. Such informal settlements are not possible without the approval of the government, including Karachi Development Authority, the police and Board of Revenue, remarked Ismail.

Building a hotel or a hostel block is not development. Development is for the people and includes provision of clean drinking water, shelter and food security, she said.

"When have the planners or the architectures catered to the needs of the majority of the people?" Ismail asked. They do not even take into account the damage done to the environment. The city planners have let down the people, she claimed.

When reclaiming public spaces, you need to go and ask the people who live there regarding the changes they want in the area. "You have to engage with people more than the space," she added.

We may be a poor country but there isn't anything poor about our minds, said architect Shahid Abdulla.

Karachi is very fortunate as it has many dedicated people working to make it better, within their resources and framework, remarked architect Hasnain Lotia.

Speaking about the renovation of Eduljee Dinshaw Road, Abdulla said that upon a friend's request he visited the Karachi Port Trust (KPT). He met a gentleman there, who asked him to transform the road in front of the Customs House and KPT.

Reclaiming the street was a tremendous task, he said. "There were drug addicts out there, along with trucks, containers, cobblers, all kinds of encroachments."

Since Abdulla lacked the expertise to restore the street to its original form, he brought another architect, Danish Zuby, on board. Zuby specialises in the décor and architecture during the British Raj.

The entire drainage system and storm water drainage was completely choked, he claimed. "There was history under that road," he said, adding that it took eight months alone to read it out.

During the renovation, traffic was barred to enter the street. So, it was decided to turn the street into a pedestrian zone, he claimed. At night, half of Kharadar throngs the place, he revealed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1074005/leaving-no-one-behind-poor-have-as-much-claim-on-karachi-as-upper-classes/>

UNEMPLOYMENT & FRUSTRATION CAN PUSH YOUTH TO CRIME: ED NV&TTC

Business Recorder March 29, 2016

“The best way to prevent frustrated and jobless youth falling prey to terrorists is to give them vocational and technical training to help them get jobs in various sectors of the industry,” said Executive Director Zulfiqar Ahmad Cheema of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NV&TTC) at press briefing on Monday.

He said 65 percent of the educated and hardworking youth were a “double-edged weapon”.

He told his audience, “Unemployment, poverty and frustration can push our youth to crime. Vocational training is the only effective tool for poverty reduction. Job placement centres have been set up to make data of the skilled manpower available to the industry.

The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission is already in touch with the industry, receiving their demands which will help it making the curriculum and a strategy to train the youth in marketable skills.”

He also said “sector skill councils” had also been established to ensure a proactive role of industry. “Urging the media to help remove the stigma attached with blue-collar jobs, the skilled labour could become a big source of earnings both for their families and for the country in form of remittances.

The NV&TTC will also train the youth in various trades and fields keeping in view requirements of the international market where they could get jobs and remit the money back home.

“We have a lot of demand in different fields from many countries of Middle East and Europe, and we will train our youth as per market demand. The NV&TTC will follow Germany and Sri Lanka as role models in technical training.

Vocational training to the youth is pivotal for economic and social development of the country.” He said the NV&TTC was already holding skill competitions and would hold job fairs in all the provincial capitals and Islamabad.

He said, “We want to gather industrialists, trainees and trainers, at one place, under one roof at Expo Centre Lahore in national Skill Show. The NV&TTC is establishing skill-counselling desks across the country for the guidance of youth.

Under the TVET Reform Support Programme, which is funded by the European Union, the Netherlands, Germany and Norway, the NV&TTC has devised TVET policy and national vocational qualifications framework policy to bring a paradigm shift in TVET delivery.

For the first time in Pakistan, a competency-based training programme has been launched in 97 institutes with expected 20,000 pass-outs.”

Technical and Vocational Training Authority Chairman Irfan Qasir Sheikh said, “The Technical and Vocational Training Authority is training more than 100,000 boys and girls every year and that the figure will go up to one million.” The head of Higher Education and Skills of the British Council, Sarah Pervez, then claimed that the British Council was supporting both organisations in improving the quality of technical and vocational training by using British experience and expertise in skills development.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/30235/>

## PUNJAB GOVT LAUNCHES NEW PROJECT ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Business Recorder March 31, 2016

LAHORE: With an initial amount of Rs five billion, the Punjab government is considering to launch a pilot project aimed at bringing prosperity of poor families through social mobilization in rural areas of the province.

Under this project, poor people of rural area will be motivated to start business on small scale with joint collaboration at union council level. Technical consultancy along with preparation of investment plan will also be provided free of cost in this regard.

Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has constituted a special committee headed by Additional Chief Secretary Punjab Shamail Ahmad Khawaja and comprising experts for considering in detail the pilot project proposed by a social leader Shoaib Sultan for poverty alleviation.

In the first meeting of the experts, a committee was constituted with the task of evolving best mechanism with regard to enhancing usefulness of proposed project at Union Council based poverty reduction.

This committee will also identify two such districts of the province for thrashing out Union Council based project which deserve more attention regarding socio-economic backwardness.

The meeting was informed that all projects of poverty alleviation are working at Tehsil level while proposed pilot project will provide technical consultation to poor people at union council level.

Under proposed pilot project, proposal has been given for constitution of community based organization comprising 20 implementation partners each in backward villages in 107 union councils.

These community organizations will jointly constitute village organizations while local support organizations will coordinate all affairs at union council level.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/03/31/5-page/745992-news.html>

‘LET’S TURN OUR LARGE POPULATION INTO A BLESSING’  
Express Tribune, April 1st, 2016.

KARACHI: The population in any country is a liability if they are not being turned into personnel, said Sindh’s planning and development department chief economist Syed Mansoor Abbas Rizvi. He is of the opinion that if the population is turned into personnel, you have transformed a curse into an asset.

He was addressing the Sindh Union-Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (Success) Programme Inception Workshop on Thursday. The rural communities of Sindh suffer from critical socio-economic conditions, which result in high prevalence of extreme and chronic poverty rates.

In 2008, the Sindh government launched the Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) in four districts of Sindh through the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs).

In order upgrade the programme, the European Union launched Success in 2015. Rizvi believes this programme will be successful in changing the lives of the people of Sindh.

“Every part of Pakistan is full of resources and we are digging out the resources inside the earth but neglecting the resources on the earth,” he said.

He said that the Sindh government is fully committed to Success and will soon extend that to six additional districts of Sindh. For this purpose the government has allocated Rs5 billion in its current budget, he added.

RSP Success programme manager Fazal Ali Saadi explained that their target was to move out 30% of targeted low-income households in eight districts out of that income bracket. Whereas, he said that 70% of the targeted poor households would report better access to and use of public services, like water, education and health. The objective, according to him, is to stimulate community-driven local development initiatives through the RSP approach.



At the end of the programme, he said that they would assess and compile its results. Saadi said that 770,000 rural households in eight districts will be mobilised through community-based organisations, of which at least 70% would continue to function effectively at the end of the project.

Community members, especially women, would be capacitated on critical social sector issues, such as health and education, he explained.

Joint development committees for both local authorities and community representatives will also be institutionalised at a district taluka level, he said.

Speaking about another expected result, he said, “An average sustainable increase of poor household incomes will be by 30 per cent and 108,000 households, especially women, will be provided technical and vocational training”.

According to Saadi, farmers and livestock owners will be trained to adopt new technologies and will be provided input to improve their food security and nutrition. The RSPs would identify and support innovative economic activities and access to efficient markets through income generating grants, he added.

Around 25% of the poorest community members will benefit from micro-health insurance, he explained, adding that 2,800 community identified basic infrastructures would be built and maintained by the communities.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1076823/community-support-lets-turn-our-large-population-into-a-blessing/>

**BISP WARNS AGAINST FAKE FORMS, PLANS FRESH SURVEY IN 15 DISTRICTS, TRIBAL AGENCY**  
Dawn, April 2nd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) officials have advised people to be vigilant of fraudulent elements trying to sell fake survey forms.

“BISP has not started a resurvey yet and no survey forms are being distributed by the organisation,” said Minister of State and BISP Chairperson Marvi Memon in response to queries of beneficiaries from across the country at Radio Pakistan in Islamabad on Friday.

She said that in the pilot phase, the resurvey would be launched in 15 districts and a tribal agency by the middle of this year. These areas are Mirpur, Charsadda, Lakki Marwat, Haripur, Chakwal, Layyah, Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, Jacobabad, Sukkar, Thatta, Gilgit, Qila Saifullah, Kech, Nasirabad and Mohmand Agency. A national resurvey will be initiated after the pilot phase is completed.

Ms Memon also issued instructions to the officials concerned for quick redressal of grievances after listening to beneficiaries’ issues. She told the callers that the resurvey forms would be free of cost.

“If anyone asks for money for resurvey forms, it should be reported immediately to the nearest police station. Complaints can also be registered at the BISP hotline: 0800-26477,” she said. BISP’s Case Management Team chief was also present to advise the callers on their problems.

The BISP is the only National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) of the country. It has data of almost 27 million households across Pakistan, which has enabled the organisation to identify eligible households through the application of a Proxy Means Test (PMT) that determines the welfare status of the household on a scale of 0-100.

According to the current NSER, 7.7 million deserving families were identified living below the cut-off score of 16.17. The BISP is currently providing financial assistance to 5.2 million of the families.

According to international standards, the age of demographic data is approximately five years, after which it needs to be updated. The BISP is therefore looking to update its data which is now almost five years old.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249529>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 21st TO MARCH 27th 2016  
'BISP BENEFICIARIES WILL BE ENABLED TO EARN DECENT LIVING'  
The Express Tribune, March 27th, 2016.

LAHORE: The federal government is providing financial assistance to 2.5 million households under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). The programme's objective is to gradually bring down the number by enabling beneficiary households to earn a decent livelihood for themselves, BISP chairperson Marvi Memon said on Saturday.

She was addressing a conference, DISCON 2016 Pakistan Conference of Commitment, arranged by the Rotary Club International-Rotary Ruryial Gujranwala.

Memon, also a state minister, said the BISP would extend all out support to other poverty reduction and women development initiatives in the country. "We want to empower our women and give them dignity and a purpose in life," she said.

She said a new survey of income-poor households in the country would be completed by the end of 2017. She said the BISP was working on a project to plug loopholes in the disbursement of funds. She said that under the project biometric verification would be made mandatory receipt of funds.

Memon said the BISP was helping women entrepreneurs in rural and far-off areas market their handicrafts through online forums.

She agreed to let the Rotary International Club use the BISP database for better targeting in its philanthropy efforts.

She said the success of the BISP's operations was owed to the efforts of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. The government's management of its finances had been praised by international financial institutions, she added. She said income-poor households would have found it hard to sustain themselves in the absence of BISP support.

Speaking to the media after the conference, she said the quarterly financial support to the beneficiary households had recently been increased from Rs4,500 to Rs 4,700.

On a question about the Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, Memon said that all reservations on the law would soon be addressed. "I have complete confidence in Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and the lawmakers in the Provincial Assembly," she said.

Rotary Club International Pakistan district governor Sajid Bhatti, Rotary Club Lahore district governor elect Mir Arif Ali, and Rotary Club Gujranwala's Rana Nasir Mehmood were also present.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1073499/social-protection-bisp-beneficiaries-will-be-enabled-to-earn-decent-living/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 14th TO MARCH 20th 2016

DEFINING POVERTY

The Express Tribune, March 14th, 2016.

Poverty, as in exactly how many of the almost 200 million people in Pakistan qualify as definitively living at or below an agreed definition of poverty, is a political hot potato. It has never been suggested that Pakistan has anything other than a considerable reservoir of 'poor' — but the actual number has fluctuated. It is currently — and ludicrously — set

at eight per cent, which among other things leads donor nations to conclude that perhaps we do not need quite so much of their largesse after all.

Now the government seems prepared to grasp the poverty nettle; and change the methodologies of measurement (again), which may lead to a figure close to 30 per cent of the population defined as living in poverty.

The difference this time around is the inclusion of non-food items in the poverty calculus. Thus a lack of, or limited access to, health and education may be factored in, giving a more holistic picture.

The Ministry of Finance and the Planning Commission are going to work together — itself a welcome development — and using a revised formula it is hoped that a new figure will be announced by mid-April. There have been changes in the poverty profile in the last decade, in part a direct result of interventions such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) as well as changes in patterns of employment.

The latter has produced cyclic poverty, where families and individuals dip in and out of poverty dependent on their employment status, and the level of income relative to basic family needs.

In terms of objective measurement, poverty has become something of a moving target — which is no excuse for not tracking it more effectively than it has been historically.

Getting a better measurement of poverty is going to enable a more effective framing of the redistributive responses to the Sustainable Development Goals, which are the successors of the widely missed — in terms of hitting the target — Millennium Development Goals.

Slaying the poverty monster is incremental, there is no single solution and is a generational struggle spanning many electoral cycles. Getting the numbers right is as good a place as any to start the battle.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065053/defining-poverty/>

LET THEM DIE

The Express Tribune, March 14th, 2016.

Kamal Siddiqi

In February, health officials of the Sindh government confirmed the death of a total of 143 children aged up to five years in Tharparkar district because of malnutrition and other causes since October last year.

This is a tragedy. What is shameful is the fact that Tharparkar is a Hindu dominated area of the country. Possibly that is why it is being neglected. In a report compiled by the Sindh government's health department, the death toll during January in Thar has been put at 40. The official figures show that 31 children died in October, 28 in November and 44 in December last year.

Now let us compare this to the findings of our civil society. According to them, the death toll since January has risen to over 190 children. This is based on information gathered by journalists from parents, villagers and elected local bodies representatives. By exposing the lie of the Sindh government, now journalists are being taken to task by government officials.

Sindh Health Minister Jam Mehtab Dahar has alleged that the media is misreporting the number of children's deaths in the drought-hit region.

Dahar claimed that "only" 32 children have died in the past month. He said doctors in Thar have also been complaining about media's reporting, which presents "misleading" numbers.

Not to be left behind, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah also said that he was “disturbed” not by the deaths but by the manner in which the deaths were being reported.

The media had quoted Dr Mohammad Iqbal Bhurgari, civil surgeon at the Mithi Civil Hospital, as saying that “only” 44 children had died in January and 16 more in February at the hospital.

But when asked about the fate of more than 80 children the hospital referred to other cities, Dr Bhurgari said he had no information whether they survived or perished.

A report by a local NGO said that a total of 2,599 children were admitted to hospitals and dispensaries in the districts over the past four months. Besides this, more than 28,000 children were examined at outpatient facilities. This gives one an idea of the size of the problem.

But our Sindh CM remains unrepentant. He has said that his government is providing one bag of wheat to each family every month for free. He also claimed that his government has been providing wheat to 1.6 million Tharis for the last five years, “but their population has increased now.” This claim itself is dubious.

What Shah sahib did not say was that the wheat being provided was of very poor quality. Most of the wheat bags are infested with insects in some instances the wheat is no longer fit for human consumption and yet it is still being supplied by government officials.

Shah also shared more pearls of wisdom. Countering criticism of his government over the issue of Thar deaths, he pointed fingers at the Punjab where he claimed, 3,000 people died from dengue fever in the past few years. But nobody questioned the Punjab government, he said, adding that the Sindh government was “unnecessarily” being criticised over the Thar issue.

According to Qaim Ali Shah, the best healthcare facilities are provided to the Mithi district headquarters hospital, which has air-conditioned rooms and 24 incubators – facilities that are, he said, not even available in Karachi in such large numbers. This is a blatant lie. No such facilities are being accorded to the people of Thar.

Parents carrying their ailing children to hospitals are complaining of a lack of proper medication, staff, and facilities. Health departments in Thar have been functioning with minimal facilities and deplorable conditions for many years. There are very little funds. Corruption takes care of the rest.

Officials lament the shortage of doctors, paramedics and health professionals. At least 300 more doctors and hundreds more paramedics are required urgently. But the Sindh government itself stopped doctors of a private university that wanted to come and help. They had them turn back on the threat of having them arrested.

Instead of treating it as a human tragedy, the Sindh government has politicized the issue. At the same time, children continue to die in their hundreds. It is time the tragedy is discussed at national level. We cannot let so many children die because of the ego of one man.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065064/let-them-die/>

## JHAGRA UNDERSCORES NEED FOR OVERCOMING POVERTY, ILLITERACY CHALLENGES

Business Recorder, March 14, 2016

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Iqbal Zafar Jhagra Sunday stressed to curb practices of human trafficking by overcoming various social problems like poverty and illiteracy.

Addressing the concluding ceremony of 3rd International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) Workshop on Human Trafficking, he said that poverty and illiteracy lead towards problems like human trafficking and it is necessary to tackle all social ills through collective efforts.

Leaders and representatives of 18 political parties of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine and Turkey, participated in the 3rd ICAPP workshop on Human Trafficking convened here from March 11 to March 13, 2016.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Iqbal Zafar Jhagra said that it is collective responsibility to tackle human trafficking with greater cooperation among various countries. Our collective goal must be ensuring efficient governance and create awareness to tackle this menace, he added.

He also explained the other causes behind human trafficking and hoped for defining effective parameters in this international conference to control this menace.

He said that present government has taken several measures to prohibit human trafficking and efforts would remain continue till its complete eradication.

Governor KP appreciated the efforts of organisers of this conference. He hoped for concrete future strategy to eradicate this serious crime after discussion among the participants.

All participants would have been benefited through this conference and positive change would be ensured back into their respective countries, he added.

Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto also congratulated the organisers for managing and hosting this conference in Pakistan. He said that his mother Benazir Bhutto was founding member of this organisation (ICAPP) and stressed the need to develop consensus for facing challenges of new world.

He said that issues have moved beyond the control of states alone and it is the time to forge unity and create consensus to face challenges of new world.

Various political parties including PML-N, PPP, PTI and PML-Q co-hosted this workshop and Bilawal Bhutto urged to forge unity among all parties to confront challenges.

In the end, the conference adopted Islamabad declaration on Human Trafficking and emphasised for co-ordinated efforts among all stakeholders to deliver a comprehensive and balanced resolution to this trans-border challenge.

All participants from various 18 political parties of various countries were urged for awareness-raising activities with the help of the business castor and the media in their respective countries.

It was stressed in Islamabad statement to ensure empowerment of people, especially women and children, who are common targets of trafficking, through education and vocational training.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/25471/>

**AGRI DEVELOPMENT CRITICAL TO REDUCING POVERTY: EXPERT**

Business Recorder, March 16, 2016

FAISALABAD: Endemic rural poverty resides in the most of developing countries whereas agricultural development is essential for poverty reduction, said Korean Expert Kil-Ung Kim, Project Manager, Pak-Korea Capacity Building Centre.

He was addressing a gathering at University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) at a session chaired by Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan at New Senate Hall on Tuesday.

He said the Korean model of rural development called Saemaul Undong had not only end the poverty from the country but also raise their living of standards. He said that Saemaul Undong, also known as new village movement was launched on April 22, 1970 to uplift rural Korean economy with diligence, self-help and collaboration.

He said that in 1970, the per capita income of the Korean was 257 dollar which had risen to 1,393 dollar in 1980. He said the movement was meant to rectify the growing disparity of the standard of living between the nation's urban centres and the small villages, which continued to be mired in poverty.

He said that Saemaul Undong accelerated the diffusion of high-yielding rice seed to farmers which resulted in green revolution in Korea. Varietal improvement contributed greatly to obtaining rice self-sufficiency in Korea since our history began. Rice self-sufficiency brought a number of benefits; feeding all Koreans, allowing to close chronic food supply deficit, increasing rural household income, and eventually dramatic increase of self-reliant villages.

The early stage of the movement focused on improving the basic living conditions, including food, health and house and environments whereas later projects concentrated on building rural infrastructure and increasing community income. He said that South Korea's 33,267 mauls, or natural villages, which had kept the traditional community consciousness of cooperation in 1970s South Korea, were chosen as unit of the movement.

The educated young of both genders were democratically elected at village assembly, known as Village General Meeting, to drive the community development projects from the bottom-up approach. He said that incentive-oriented government support to the village according their achievement after the initial government subsidies in 1970-1971.

He said that Saemaul model education focused on mental revolution management skills and organizational skills whereas teaching methods included lectures, sharing of success stories and life stories, meditation, and field trips to successful villages.

UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan stressed upon the need to learn from Korean experiences by quoting the example of South Korea which had faced extreme poverty in 60s. But, after shifting their focus on rural development, it has emerged as one of the developed nations with 30,000 dollar per capita income.

He said that the poverty cannot be alleviated without the rural development. He said that the food security was one of biggest challenges as area of fertile land was decreasing and it is being converted to residential colonies. He said the increasing population was causing many problems for us. He also stressed upon the need of rural development.

MNS Agriculture University Rawalpindi Prof Dr Asif Ali said that most of the our population was associated with the agriculture sector. If we are able to address their issues and to raise their income, the dream of poverty alleviation can be met. He said that Income increase of rural household is essential element for making Saemaul Undong be successful one.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/03/16/3-page/741258-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 7th TO MARCH 13th 2016

DROUGHTS, GOVT APATHY CAUSED THAR SITUATION TO AGGRAVATE, SAYS RIGHTS BODY

Dawn, March 11th, 2016

MITHI: Members of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) said on Thursday that successive droughts and callousness on the part of government have caused the situation in the desert to assume alarming proportions.

It was undeniable proof to the government's callousness that despite death of hundreds of children no serious effort had been made so far to fill posts of over 300 doctors lying vacant in Thar hospitals for the past many years, they said.

The NCHR team comprising retired Justice Ali Nawaz Chowhan and Anees Haroon and Piler members told journalists at the Thar Press Club that an unspecified number of desert families had migrated to barrage areas over the past four years due to a lack of fodder and water.

They stressed the need for formulating a comprehensive policy to save the area from further devastation.

The NCHR team that arrived in Mithi late on Thursday night along with Piler members visited a number of villages and held meetings with government officials as well as representatives of NGOs to assess the situation and their efforts to provide relief to people.

Members of civil society and Piler's Karamat Ali and Dr Sono Khanghrani informed the team that the Sindh government was not making serious efforts to mitigate sufferings of Thar and where about 250 children had died from malnutrition and other diseases.

They said that instead of launching small projects to provide potable water to 1.5 million people the government was relying on a few costly reverse osmosis plants, which too mostly remained out of order.

Dr Satram Roopani, representative of the Health and Nutrition Development Society, told the team that resolution of health issues of the desert needed long-term policies.

Teerath Das of Sukaar Foundation said that provision of safe drinking water was the biggest issue of the desert.

Presence of fluoride and arsenic in subsoil water was causing fatal diseases among desert people, he said.

Partab Shivani of Alif Ailaan said that literacy rate was on the decline because of successive droughts, displacement of people on a large scale and government indifference.

Justice Chowhan assured members of civil society that the team would submit a detailed report to the prime minister, National Assembly, Senate and Sindh Assembly on Thar's woes and set up a special cell on Thar in the commission's office in Islamabad to provide a forum to people to submit their complaints, he said.

Five more children died from malnutrition and other diseases in government hospitals across Thar over the past two days. A pregnant Ms Surhi also died at Mithi Civil Hospital allegedly because of doctors' negligence.

Five-year-old Deedar Ali and a newborn died at the civil hospital while Mahaya of seven months, Sanullah of six months and Sabita Kaloi lost lives at rural health centers in Islamkot and Kaloi towns.

Meanwhile relatives of Surhi staged a demonstration outside the Mithi civil hospital and demanded thorough probe into the woman's death.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1244860>

NO DATA ON POVERTY ASSESSMENT FOR A DECADE

Dawn, March 12th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday reviewed progress on developing a methodology to assess poverty rate and firm up data, which will help the government design its policies and interventions accordingly.

A comparative analysis of the Food Energy Intake (FEI) and Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) methods was presented before the meeting which was informed that no data had officially been released on poverty assessment for a decade.

Pakistan was using the FEI method, which is no longer in common use, while the CBN method is being used all over the world.

The meeting noted that an assessment of poverty would enable the government to determine proper development objectives, including re-distributive policies (safety net) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It was decided that the work on the adoption of an updated poverty line for 2013-14 and earlier years based on an improved methodology in accordance with international and regional standards be expedited and completed by April 15, 2016.

It was decided that the nutritional standard being followed in Pakistan since 2000-01 would be maintained, for example 2,350 calories per person instead of the lower standard of 2,150 calories per person which was being adopted by many countries in region to determine the poverty line.

It was further decided that technical review meetings may be held with reputed academics and think tanks before finalising the new methodology.

These meetings should share the technical work on validating the trend on the old line and setting of the new line in the context of the government's inclusive growth strategy and SDGs.

The finance minister appreciated the efforts being undertaken for developing the new methodology and collecting credible data on determining the poverty line.

He emphasised increased functional coordination between federal and provincial bureaus as it would help increase efficiency, enhance capacity and coverage and ensure requisite data for monitoring SDGs.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Ahsan Iqbal was also present in the meeting.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1245080/no-data-on-poverty-assessment-for-a-decade>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 29th TO March 6th 2016

COOPERATION: WORLD BANK TO HELP CREATE JOBS

The Express Tribune, March 5th, 2016.

The World Bank and the provincial government agreed on Friday to work on a skill-development programme to create jobs. For the purpose, a framework will be formulated with the cooperation of a World Bank consortium.

“Draft of the framework should be presented at the earliest,” Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif told a meeting on Friday. He said skill development would help the country's youth get jobs.

The chief minister said two million youngsters would be trained in various skills under the Development Strategy-2018.

World Bank Country Director Patchamuthu Illangovan said that apart from other social sectors, cooperation in skill development would continue.

Provincial Ministers Raja Ashfaq Sarwar, Rana Mashhood Ahmed and Ayesha Ghaus Pasha, Chief Minister's Advisers Khwaja Salman Rafique and Ijaz Nabi, Chief Secretary Khizar Hayat Gondal and the Planning and Development Board chairman attended the meeting.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1059643/cooperation-world-bank-to-help-create-jobs/>



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## April 2016

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 25th TO MAY 1st 2016*

### ***POVERTY ALLEVIATION: EXPERT SAYS MICROFINANCE NOT EFFECTIVE IN ALL GROUPS***

The Express Tribune, April 25th, 2016.

Maryam Usman

ISLAMABAD: Microfinance may be an effective tool to empower people and alleviate poverty but it is also further overburdening people, who suffer from extreme poverty, says an expert from Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

Talking to The Express Tribune, PPAF official Samia Liaquat Ali Khan said the alleviation fund looks at the poverty scorecard that the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) used to identify households that are under a certain threshold.

For example, anyone who is facing poverty, would be anywhere from 0 to 23 on the poverty score-card. Within these bands, the lower ranges from 0 to 18 refer to the ultra-poor and vulnerable households, which need to have support in ways different from the households who are better off than them.

She said microfinance operations support those households, which are ranked 20 or above on the score-card. “Microfinance becomes really that lynchpin that allows them to take a foothold in the mainstream economy and to improve themselves as a result.”

However, she said offering micro-finance to people on the lower ranges of the scorecard means putting burden of debt on vulnerable households, who are not able or do not have the kind of income stream coming in that help them repay that debt.

This was one of the reasons why the PPAF decided that microfinance clients must be above a certain level of poverty so they cannot be the ultra-vulnerable or poor.

“But for those households which fall into that cap – and there are a lot of households that the BISP has also identified – anyone under that point would be eligible for social protection from the BISP, which is Rs1,500 a month,” she said.

In their research, she said, they found that the little stipend goes to support consumption though it does not cover the family’s full cost. “It is used for consumption-smoothing such as extra food on the table, maybe some little bit of healthcare.”

“Fifteen hundred rupees is fine and it should be provided as social protection,” she said. “Every country needs to have a social protection programme but there has to be some push that is trying to get them out of poverty.”

According to Samia, the poverty-graduation approach is showing results and is something that needs to be focused on. “We’ve realised that the consumption-smoothing stipend that the BISP provides, should be provided. There is a need for that, but there is a need for that for the poorest households,” she said.

Referring to a global study on poverty graduation published last year, she said: “We piloted this asset transfer programme in certain coastal areas of Sindh where there were 2,000 households. The results that came out show an

increase in consumption of the households, an increase in the wealth of their households and the income of the households,” Samia said.

Interestingly, there was also an improvement in the psycho-social status of the households. “So the perceived status that these households had, had improved. So their own perception of how they were regarded by their neighbours or by the village members and that also links to more confidence and self-empowerment as well.”

Alongside, the team found that women must become primary agents for change in their communities. “We have a scheme that we are running with the government of Pakistan – it is called the prime minister’s interest-free loan scheme that is interest being provided to households who are not ready for the regular micro-finance but are looking for some interest-free loans,” she added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1091096/poverty-alleviation-expert-says-microfinance-not-effective-in-all-groups/>

URBAN POVERTY

Dawn, April 26th, 2016

Neil Buhne

WHEN I first arrived in Pakistan in 1990, there were 120 million people. The population in urban areas was 33m. When I returned five months ago, there were 70 to 80m more Pakistani citizens, and the population in urban areas more than doubled to 80m people. The bulk of this growth is characterised by an increasing number of people living in slums. The urban landscape today is predominantly shaped by families squatting in substandard housing.

This alarming rise in urban poverty represents a current and future risk for Pakistan. It is a current risk because the paucity of public services means that the millions living in slums do not have access to the education and health services which are both their right and the foundation for any meaningful development to take place. Their situation is often worsened by threats to their human security from increased level of crimes, sometimes accompanied by armed violence.

It is also a future risk for Pakistan. The country has a young population with over 50pc being under 25. A similar proportion defines the slum occupancy. If current conditions do not improve, young people will continue to face daunting social and economic challenges with fewer opportunities to break the vicious circle of abject poverty.

This puts them at risk of being involved in crimes, extremism and drugs thus destabilising the social fabric of society and its economy. There is also the risk that they will live in places where a weak sense of community hampers rather than helps their well-being.

It is the children and mothers that will feel the pinch of urban poverty the most. In a recent report I read, children under five of the urban poor are twice as likely to die as the urban rich. Similarly, the average survival rate of children in rural areas is better than their counterparts in the slums. Obesity in children will increasingly capture the public health sector as the next big challenge.

The migration of families from rural to urban areas affects their food consumption patterns. Children become deprived of necessary nutritional values with the increased intake of processed food, high energy, sugar and refined grains fat-based as they abandon their traditional sources of intake from ‘home-grown’ production.

But there is still hope and a strong resolve. With the right policies and with the right programmes implemented in the right ways, these slums can be transformed into thriving communities, that would provide opportunities for development and community growth.

The experience from the Orangi Pilot Programme in Karachi 25 years ago, which is a best practice adopted and applied worldwide, shows what can be done when people are given the space to organise themselves to improve conditions in their ‘slum’ communities, and when the government provides a conducive and enabling environment for this.

The government has recognised the importance of urban development in Pakistan and encapsulates this in its Vision 2025 which says, “The challenge for Pakistan will be to address the existing challenges of the large urban centres while planning ahead for the continued migration towards cities”. It lays out a vision for urban development and smart cities linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly to Goal 11 of “making cities and human settlements, inclusive safe, resilient and sustainable”.

The first specific target for this global goal is: “By 2030 ensure access for all to adequate safe and affordable housing and basic service and upgrade slums.” In order to meet this target, there is a need to work across a number of areas and in an integrated manner — including education, health, jobs, energy efficiency, and responsible consumption and adapting to climate change — among others. When this target is met, the benefits to all the people of Pakistan will be enormous with transformative changes taking place that converts the risks into opportunities for equitable and sustainable human development.

Everyone has to be involved with the government taking the lead to help transform these slums into thriving communities. More specifically, this will involve implementing national plans, and leadership at all levels, complementing community action. International experience shows this works only when there is such national resolve.

To complement this, the UN team in Pakistan can build partnerships, provide technical expertise and assistance, and support implementation of programmes. For instance, UN-Habitat is the UN agency specialising in issues of urban development and can play a crucial role, along with a number of other agencies that have the necessary expertise to help across the range of diverse needs.

Improving conditions in slums is a broad development challenge. It only requires a strong and collective resolve where all people work together at the national, provincial, local and community levels to transform the challenges of urban poverty into opportunities and well-being for all.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1254363>

#### OUR NEW POVERTY ESTIMATE

The Express Tribune, April 29th, 2016.

Poverty is easy enough to recognize by those who experience its multidimensional deprivations on a daily basis, or even by those who invariably confront its glaring pervasiveness. However, measuring poverty is not as straightforward as we might think. The number of poor people can shrink or expand drastically by changing the definition of what it means to be poor.

Policymakers in our country are fairly apt at reducing poverty by altering how poverty should be measured. During the Musharraf era, for example, we saw an evident demonstration of poverty being drastically reduced based on faulty estimates, which claimed a decline in the poverty incidence from nearly 35 percent in 2000-01 to around 23 percent in 2004-05.

Most development economists and practitioners refuted the possibility of Pakistan having actually reduced one-third of its poverty within a period of only four years. Yet, the government of the day continued to tout these figures to gain political mileage.

Given the tendency to make enthusiastic claims about poverty reduction by trying to tweak how poverty should be measured, it was a surprise to note the recent change in the definition of poverty, motivated by the imperative of obtaining a more accurate picture of ground realities. To do so, Pakistan has shifted from a poverty formula based on food energy intake to one based on the cost of meeting basic needs.

Under this new methodology, the poverty line has been raised by Rs650, and is now set at around Rs3,000 a month. While Rs3,000 is still quite a stringent criterion for a poverty line, at least the new measure goes beyond considering

the amount of money people need for buying a basic amount of food energy, and tries to incorporate some non-food expenditures in its calculation.

Using this newer formula, 30 per cent of Pakistanis could be considered poor (in 2013-14), whereas according to the older definition, only 10 per cent of the country would have been categorised as being poor.

It is encouraging to see the current government taking the politically sensitive step of changing the measure of poverty to admit that poverty is much higher than the ridiculously low numbers being cited earlier.

Yet, experts point out that even this new definition falls short in terms of providing an accurate picture of the extent of deprivation in our country. Based on the UNDP's Multidimensional Poverty Index, which complements traditional income-based poverty measures by capturing lack of access to adequate living standards, education, health, and services, poverty in Pakistan is around 44 per cent.

While conceding to the new definition of poverty, the government has been quick to point out that poverty is decreasing, even according to the new basic needs definition.

However, development economists who endorse the official view that poverty is, in fact, decreasing, are hard-pressed to explain why other major indicators of poverty, such as malnutrition or infant and maternal mortality rates remain so alarmingly high.

On the other hand, our present government lacks the ability to tax its citizens to create a sustainable base for effective service delivery and social safety nets. New, innovative programmes for urban populations are nowhere to be seen.

Rural poverty is still a major challenge. Rural development policies such as corporate farming and computerising land records will also do nothing for those who own no land and are working as sharecroppers or agricultural labourers at ridiculously low wages.

Adopting market-driven donor prescriptions such as the provision of small loans at high interest rates as the fix-all elixir to the national malaise of both urban and rural poverty, does not work. Building expensive infrastructure will also do little to address the underlying and deep-seated causes of marginalisation and exclusion.

In order to make a serious dent in the prevailing poverty in our country, government officials and international donors need to relinquish the conventional wisdom of investing more in the haves in order to generate more growth, since its benefits do not sufficiently trickle down to the have-nots.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1093694/our-new-poverty-estimate/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 18th TO APRIL 24th 2016

HEALTH CHALLENGE: 45% OF ALL CHILD DEATHS DUE TO MALNUTRITION: EXPERTS

The Express Tribune, April 20th, 2016.

FAISALABAD: A total of 45 per cent of all child deaths in Pakistan are due to malnutrition, said health experts on Tuesday.

They were addressing the 26th All Pakistan Food Science Conference, arranged by the National Institute of Food Science, University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) in collaboration with Pakistan Society of Food Scientists and Technologists.

UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan said that the country faced a crisis of malnutrition which was among the worst in the world. "A total of 32.7 per cent of children suffer from iron deficiency, 30.3 per cent from a vitamin A and 40 per cent from a zinc deficiency," Khan said. He said that food fortification was needed to address the issue. He said that the establishment of the Punjab Food Authority would help ensure quality food for people.

UAF Faculty of Food, Nutrition and Home Sciences Dean Prof Dr Masood Sadiq Butt said that two billion people subsisted on diets that lacked vital vitamins and nutrients in the world. "Under-nutrition, including micronutrient

malnutrition, is one of the main causes of impaired physical and mental development among infants and children. Scaling up wheat flour fortification is needed to protect future generations from nutrient deficiency,” he said.

Pakistan Society of Food Scientists and Technologists president Prof Dr Faqir Anjum said that the world population stood at seven billion and it would reach the nine billion mark in 2050. “We are losing three per cent of Gross Domestic Product due to malnutrition. Most of the country’s population is living below the poverty line,” he said. Prof Dr Muhammad Shafique said that malnutrition was one of the leading causes of child mortality in the country. He said that more steps were needed to ensure food fortification in order to fight the challenge of malnutrition. He said that scientists, experts, NGOs and the academia should participate in this struggle.

Dr Tahir Zahoor said that only five per cent of food items were being processed for value addition. “With the value addition, the country can earn heavy foreign exchange,” he said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1087959/health-challenge-45-of-all-child-deaths-due-to-malnutrition-experts/>

## POVERTY PUZZLES

Dawn, April 22nd, 2016

Faisal Bari

Whichever way you parse the data we have it shows that poverty headcount in Pakistan over the last decade and a half to two decades has decreased substantially. Initially, it was thought the data was not good enough, that it had been manipulated and so on, but even after multiple rounds of national surveys, the same trends are evident. And though the actual percentage of the poor may vary with the method one uses, the trend of falling poverty remains invariant. There must be something to this trend.

Poverty headcount, by the old line, has reduced to below 10pc in recent surveys. It is common practice, when poverty headcount goes below 10pc odd, to rebase the poverty line so that it gives some meaningful numbers. Social policy, if it has to work with less than 10pc odd of the population, is not as effective and/or useful.

When all sorts of analyses confirmed that Pakistan’s poverty headcount had indeed gone below 10pc, the ministries of finance and planning, with help from the World Bank, decided to rebase the poverty line. This rebasing was announced a few weeks back. According to the new poverty line and numbers, poverty headcount is around 29pc of the population.

At the same time, the perception in the country is that poverty, if it has not gone up, has not decreased. How does one square this circle? There are other puzzles here too. While the poverty reduction trend seems to be robust, malnutrition and stunting incidence, especially in children, seem to be on the increase.

If the population is able to meet their basic caloric needs, as well as purchase other necessities, why are malnutrition and stunting incidence increasing? Are people choosing to eat and feed their children poorly? Why would that be the case? There are some systematic changes in buying patterns in terms of a shift from non-processed food to processed food, an increase in meat consumption compared to lentil consumption, but these do not explain the malnutrition increase phenomenon. This is a very important puzzle to resolve.

Infant mortality and maternal mortality numbers have also been, more or less, stagnating over the same period. If poverty has come down, why is it not translating into better health and longevity outcomes for people?

One possible explanation here is that health outcomes are not only tied to the income level of a household but to availability of good quality public goods: water and sanitation facilities, healthcare facilities, and environmental conditions. Even if the income of a household increases, they might still be drinking poor quality water or using pits for waste water disposal and/or living in an environment where solid waste is not collected from the streets.

We know that a lot of Pakistani children suffer from diarrhoea and have worms in their digestive tracts and one major reason for both of the above is the fecal-to-oral route. We also know that drinking water quality, across the country, has been deteriorating. So, stagnation in health outcomes might have to do with lack of provision of needed public goods. And it might not be possible, now, to move on infant and maternal mortality and health outcome issues without major investments in public goods provision.

An even more interesting issue is that we do not really know why poverty has come down in Pakistan. What have been the determinants of reducing poverty and what has been driving it? It is definitely not tied to GDP growth in Pakistan. Over the last 15 odd years only two to three were reasonable-to-high GDP growth years (2004-2007).

In other years, growth rates have been quite poor. But poverty, even over slow-growth years, has continued to decline. At the same time, we have also seen increases in inequality in Pakistan. And the government has not been very active on the redistributive side as well. So, if the economy is not growing fast, and there is no redistribution of existing resources happening, how is poverty coming down?

There are a couple of promising hypotheses here. Some researchers think remittance flows have been increasing substantially and they might explain the reduction in poverty. This, to me, does not sound too promising an explanation. Remittance numbers are not that large, but more importantly, remittance flows are unevenly distributed across Pakistan and it should be possible, through careful analysis, to see if higher poverty reduction has been achieved in areas where remittance flows have been larger.

Some researchers think that it is growth of the informal economy, over the last decade and a half, that explains the reduction in poverty. Our GDP series does not capture the informal economy very well.

So, if there has been growth in the informal economy, it is possible to see reductions in poverty without seeing a significant connection with GDP growth rates. We need much more detailed micro level work here to see if growth in the informal sector is indeed what is driving the reduction in poverty.

Poverty has reduced but we do not understand why and we do not understand the movement, or lack thereof, in correlates. Why has inequality increased? How come poverty reduction and GDP growth rates are not related? Why has malnutrition increased even as poverty has come down? Why are we not seeing reductions in infant and maternal mortality and why are health outcomes not improving?

What other investments, in public goods, are needed to move correlates in a desirable direction? It is time the poverty debate in Pakistan moves beyond the numbers issue. We need to understand the dynamics of poverty and poverty reduction better. This is imperative for designing effective social-sector policies.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1253593/poverty-puzzles>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 11th TO APRIL 17th 2016

A REALISTIC METRIC OF POVERTY

Business Recorder, April 11, 2016

According to the Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, Ahsan Iqbal, while addressing a seminar on "Poverty Estimation" which he co-chaired with Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, the number of poor in Pakistan has increased after a new methodology for measuring poverty was adopted using 2013-14 survey data.

He added that the 2001 poverty line formula that had placed 20 million Pakistanis below the poverty line was outdated and misleading and the current figure for poverty places 60 million people below the poverty line.

Who was responsible for the change in the poverty formula? While lauding Iqbal's decision to accept the new formula and present data that was neither misleading nor outdated even though the numbers are naturally politically damaging for the party in power, yet it is relevant to note that the change was undertaken subsequent to an agreement between

the ministry of planning, development and reforms, the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – an agreement signed almost two years ago in 2014.

What is the new formula and what is its history? According to the UNDP website, Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was developed and published for the very first time in its 2010 report and defines it as identifying “deprivations across the same three dimensions as the Human Development Index and shows the number of people who are multi-dimensionally poor and the number of deprivations with which poor households typically contend with. It can be deconstructed by region, ethnicity and other groupings as well as by dimension, making it an apt tool for policymakers”.

OPHI notes that “poverty is often defined by one-dimensional measures, such as income. But no one indicator alone can capture the multiple aspects that constitute poverty. Multidimensional poverty is made up of several factors that constitute poor people’s experience of deprivation – such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standard, lack of income (as one of several factors considered), disempowerment, poor quality of work and threat from violence”.

Ahsan Iqbal clarified that while food energy intake was the model in use in 2001 yet it was not a representative one and revealed that the methodology for computing the MPI in Pakistan was through choosing “10 to 40 percent of distribution as reference group, 2350 calories as minimum welfare measure and cost of basic needs as method with the objective of capturing non-food expenditures.” \

However, it was also revealed that the percentage of poor fell by around 25 percent – Dar as is his usual practice focused on the decline in the percentage of poor – from 34.6 percent in 2001-02 to 9.3 percent in 2013-14 – and stated that “whatever the methodology the poverty level in the country has declined,” though in all fairness he did add that poverty is a challenge and the government would take measures to try to cut it.

One would have greatly appreciated if Ishaq Dar had dwelt at length on some specific measures that the government is in the process of formulating for the budget 2016-17 – measures designed specifically to reduce the new disturbing poverty line data that has tripled the number of Pakistanis under the poverty line. One can only hope that such an exercise is ongoing in the Ministry of Finance as the budget making exercise is already underway.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/04/11/16-page/749358-news.html>

## MORE INCLUSIVE POVERTY LINE: A BOLD AND HISTORIC DECISION

The Express Tribune, April 11th, 2016

Illango Patchamuthu / Ana Revenga

Pakistan recently adopted a new poverty line which sets a much higher bar for inclusive development. This is a historic decision on its own, but the level of collective thinking and collaboration between various arms of the government and other stakeholders that went into the process, calls for special applause.

The new line, which uses an improved methodology, sets a minimum consumption threshold of Rs3,030 per adult equivalent, per month. This translates to Rs21,000 per month for a household at the poverty line, allowing nearly 60 million people to be targeted for pro-poor and inclusive development policies.

This new poverty line acknowledges that as societies develop, the minimum standards for a productive life, for personal dignity and for social acceptability also change — and all societies that aim to build democratic and inclusive polities must respond to such changes by raising the consumption floor for all. This is what Pakistan did last week, and it is very significant.

It is also very timely. Pakistan has seen a rapid and consistent decline in poverty since 2001, with the headcount poverty rate falling from close to 35 per cent, to well under 10 per cent by 2014, the most recent year for which data is available.

Though a more comprehensive analysis of the drivers of this process and its sustainability is necessary, there can be little argument that Pakistan is a different country today than it was in 2001. In the past decade and a half, Pakistan has seen rapid urbanisation, significant infrastructure growth, substantial movement of labour to the non-farm sector, and massive increases in private remittance inflows by Pakistani workers.

Remittances, which tend to benefit poorer households more, have likely fuelled a good bit of the decline in poverty. This pattern of declining poverty and large remittance flows is also not unique to Pakistan. It is a story that is playing out in much of South Asia, where most countries are also poised to update their poverty lines.

Pakistan's people have also changed the way they spend and what they own — something that we often see when poverty declines. For example, 18 per cent of the poorest households now own motorcycles, compared to just 2 per cent fifteen years ago; the number of households without any type of toilet has been cut in half — from close to 60 per cent, to about 30 per cent among the poorest; and even the least advantaged families in Pakistan have moved towards a more diverse diet, with a greater consumption of dairy, meat, and fruits and vegetables. This has also brought the rural diet into much closer alignment with urban food preferences and tastes, as often happens with development.

Last week's announcement also settles the decade-long confusion on the trend in poverty in Pakistan. The government has officially released both the old and the new poverty lines and poverty rates and committed itself to tracking both going into the future. The back casting of the new line also reiterates that it really does set a higher bar.

This new poverty line would have implied a poverty rate of 64 per cent in 2001, rather than the official rate of 34.5 per cent based on the old line. Both lines show the same declining trend in poverty over the past 15 or so years, however, the new rate is always substantially higher than the old one — precisely because it casts the net wider and brings more of the relatively disadvantaged into the fold of targeted development programs.

However, the true fruits of poverty reduction will only be fully evident when the quality of public service delivery rises to meet the growing needs of the population, and key services are accessible to all. Pakistan now needs to scale up its efforts on this front. There are a number of critical areas such as child stunting and maternal mortality, for example, where despite the reduction in poverty, progress has been slow.

Lack of progress on stunting has also been used to question the decline in poverty. However, stunting is only partially a food deficit, and thus a poverty issue. It is equally, if not more, about sanitation and safe drinking water — largely public service delivery issues.

The World Bank remains committed to working with the government of Pakistan to continue the strong progress on poverty reduction and move the needle on key development indicators, using both development assistance and high quality evidence and analysis to make programs and policies more effective for those who need them the most.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1082211/more-inclusive-poverty-line-a-bold-and-historic-decision/>

#### **FAULT LINE: MINISTER SAYS ONLY 29M LIVING BELOW POVERTY LINE**

The Express Tribune, April 15th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: A person who earns Rs3,000 per month, though poor, is not living below the poverty line, a senior minister of the PML-N government said, citing the international yardstick to evaluate the poorest-of-the-poor in the country.

Minister for States and Frontier Regions (Safron) Lt-Gen (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch told the National Assembly on Thursday that according to international standards a person earning Rs3,000 every month is not living below the poverty line.

He was responding to a calling attention notice regarding increase in poverty since 60 million people were living below the poverty line, causing grave concern amongst the public.



Baloch rejected the number, saying the actual number of people living below the poverty line in Pakistan is 29 million. He said poverty is an international issue and there are many standards to judge it.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1084822/fault-line-minister-says-only-29m-living-below-poverty-line/>

## DEVELOPMENT BANKS URGED TO PUT MORE ENERGY INTO POWER FOR POOR

Business Recorder, April 16, 2016

BARCELONA: The World Bank and other major development banks are investing far too little in getting electric power to poor people around the globe, and should allocate at least half their energy budgets to such projects, environmental groups said on Thursday.

Some 1.1 billion people, one in seven of the world's population, still lack access to electricity. New global goals agreed this year set a target for everybody to have access to "affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy" by 2030.

In a report issued as the World Bank spring meetings began in Washington DC, the Sierra Club and Oil Change International said top development banks had made little progress in their overall contribution to achieving that goal in the past two years.

"For far too long, massive centralised power plants and expanding the grid have been the default approach in addressing energy poverty – a strategy which has clearly failed to reach the world's poorest," said Alex Doukas of Oil Change International.

The African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank dedicated the highest proportion of their energy portfolios to energy access, at just over a quarter each in the three fiscal years 2012 to 2014, according to the report.

The World Bank allocated 10 percent of its energy investment to access over that period, while the Inter-American Development Bank's share was just under 6 percent, the report showed.

"There's still time to reach the world's goal of eliminating energy poverty by 2030 if these institutions act fast to rebalance their budgets toward what's needed," said Vrinda Manglik of the Sierra Club's International Climate and Energy Campaign.

As well as putting at least half of their energy funding into boosting access for the poor, they should ensure two-thirds of that money goes towards "distributed" clean energy projects, including mini-grids and off-grid power from renewable sources such as solar, wind or hydro, the groups said.

A World Bank spokesman said an additional \$40 billion per year would be needed to achieve universal energy access by 2030, but multilateral development banks (MDBs) could not provide this alone, and private-sector investment would be vital.

The report also said fossil fuels "are not serving the poor".

From fiscal 2012 to 2014, only around 5 percent of funding for fossil fuel energy projects backed by the four development banks included provisions that would increase access for the poor, it said.

Centralised power production and grid expansion also overlook the poor because the grid has yet to reach many rural areas – home to 84 percent of those who lack access to electricity. In addition, grid power is often unreliable and unaffordable for poor households, the report said.

Power for All, a global campaign bringing together business and civil society leaders, urged the development banks to speed up efforts to end energy poverty by creating dedicated funds for access to decentralised renewable energy and fast-tracking projects to implement it.

“The disproportionate MDB financial support for slow, expensive centralised power projects over fast, cost-effective decentralised renewables is perhaps one of the greatest missed opportunities in development today,” said campaign director Kristina Skierka.

An independent evaluation of the World Bank Group’s support for electricity access from 2000 to 2014 showed that the median implementation time of its investment projects was nine years.

In comparison, decentralised systems such as solar mini-grids and solar panels on the rooftops of homes can be rolled out in just a few months at a fraction of the cost of centralised power generation, reaching far more people within a decade, according to Power for All.

The report from the Sierra Club and Oil Change International noted that, of the four MDBs, the Inter-American Development Bank spent the largest share of its energy access portfolio on off-grid and mini-grid power, at 25 percent over the three years assessed.

But the World Bank said 57 percent of its investment in new connections in 2015 went to off-grid solutions, and it was working to increase investment in distributed energy.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has estimated that to achieve energy access for all by 2030, 64 percent of new investments should be allocated to mini-grids and off-grid power, the report noted.

“Energy access at its core is about enabling countries to develop. Without it, countries cannot grow, create jobs, children cannot study at night,” the World Bank spokesman said.

“That’s why we have to look at the full array of energy solutions – on-grid and off-grid.-Reuters

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/04/16/15-page/751713-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 4th TO APRIL 10th 2016

NEW POVERTY LINE MAKES A THIRD OF PAKISTANIS POOR

Dawn, April 8th, 2016

Mubarak Zeb Khan

ISLAMABAD: The PML-N government on Thursday announced that 60 million Pakistanis are living below the poverty line, posing a challenge for the ruling party.

The number of poor increased owing to the adoption of a new methodology for measuring poverty which uses the 2013-14 survey data, said Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Ahsan Iqbal.

Addressing a seminar on ‘Poverty Estimation’ while co-chairing along with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Mr Iqbal said the incumbent government was committing itself to a greater challenge because 2001 poverty line formula that placed 20m people poor was outdated and misleading.

The new poverty line estimates the number of poor households at 6.8m to 7.6m. “So we are raising bar for ourselves. But we have decided to do so,” the minister said.

Using 2013-14 data, the poverty headcount ratio comes out to be 29.5pc of the population. In monetary terms, poverty line stands at Rs3,030 per adult equivalent per month, the minister said.

Under the old poverty line, the percentage of the poor fell by around 25 percentage points, from a high of 34.6pc in 2001-02 to 9.3pc in 2013-14.

Further analysis of the past data under the new poverty line estimates the poverty headcount ratio at 63.3pc in 2001-02, which has now fallen to 29.5pc.

Headcount poverty was computed in Pakistan in 2001. Since then the ground reality has changed altogether amid structural reforms, liberalization, social safety nets, increase in remittances and natural calamities.

In the 16 years, the country has changed in many important ways. The line, therefore, sets far too low a bar for inclusive development policies, he said.

“We needed to choose from reference group, measure of welfare (calories) and method,” the minister said, adding: “We have chosen 10-40pc of distribution as reference group, 2,350 calories as minimum welfare measure and cost of basic needs as method.”

The 2001 model of poverty measurement was based on food energy intake (FEI), which was not a representative one. To make it more transparent and coherent, the government has also incorporated costs of basic needs (CBN) for capturing non-food expenditures in the new formula.

Non-food items will include expenditures on education, health and mobile phones. These will be added to basket for calculating the exact number of poor in the country.

Data shows poverty levels were in decline since 2001, falling from 34.7pc in 2000-01 to 23.3pc in 2004-05, 21.9pc in 2005-06, 16.5pc in 2007-08, 12.2pc in 2010-11, 12.4pc in 2011-12 and 9.3pc in 2013-14 as estimated by the World Bank.

Official poverty figures have not been released since 2005-06.

Meanwhile, Mr Dar said there was no need to go for a new International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. “The government has taken several steps to promote economic growth in the country.”

He said the foreign exchange reserves have touched a historic high level. The minister said that poverty is a challenge and the government would take measures to cut it. “Whatever the methodology, the poverty level in the country has declined,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1250694/new-poverty-line-makes-a-third-of-pakistanis-poor>

## BALUCHISTAN GOVT TO MAKE NUTRITION TOP PRIORITY: MINISTER

Dawn, April 8th, 2016

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: The Balochistan government would make nutrition its top priority, said provincial Planning and Development Minister Dr Hamid Khan Achakzai on Thursday.

He said the political leadership was concerned over micronutrient deficiency among the masses and its impact on their health. The minister was speaking at an advocacy seminar organised by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (Gain), National Fortification Alliance (NFA) and the provincial nutrition cell.

Dr Achakzai said his ministry would make efforts under the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative with support from partners such as Gain to address the issue of malnutrition in the province. Engagement with the private sector, including flour and oil mills, was important and should be utilised to address the impact of malnutrition in the province, he said.

The minister urged the mill owners to fortify staple food items, including wheat flour and edible oil.

On the occasion, MNA Abdul Qahar Wadan, a member of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Health, said that nutrition was a high-priority issue and a part of the Vision 2025 plan.

He said the federal health ministry had been working on food fortification for several years and claimed that it was a cost-effective measure to address malnutrition.

Food fortification would help bring about improvement in nutritional status of women and children, he added.

MPA Nasrullah Zeray said that malnutrition was a serious issue both in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Dr Baseer Khan Achakzai, the director of NFA, said it was encouraging to see that Balochistan's parliamentarians were aware of the issue and were supporting fortification of food. The country director of Gain, Sajjad Imran, explained the Regional Food Fortification Project which focuses on the production and distribution of fortified wheat flour and edible oil/ghee to people in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan.

He said the project would be implemented in the two provinces with cooperation from the private sector.

According to Dr Ali Nasir Bugti, nutrition indicators in Balochistan were poor.

He said a survey conducted by the federal health department and the Aga Khan University Hospital showed that 16 per cent of the children faced serious nutrition problems, with 40pc of them falling in the low weight category and 52pc being shorter in height in comparison to other children of their age.

The report further claimed that 54.9pc of women and 73.5pc of children were deficient in Vitamin A while 48.9pc of women and 56.8pc of children were deficient in iron in Balochistan.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1250700/balochistan-govt-to-make-nutrition-top-priority-minister>

## PUNJAB GOVERNMENT SIGNS MOU WITH WFP

Business Recorder April 8, 2016

Punjab government on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the United Nations World Food Programme for the implementation of WFP supported activities in Punjab under its 3-years Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation – “Transition: Towards Resilient and Food Secure Pakistan”.

On the behalf of Punjab government, Provincial Secretary P&D Iftikhar Ali Sahoo and Lola Castro, Country Director World Food Programme Pakistan from United Nations signed jointly the MOU at P&D Complex, here on Thursday.

Addressing the ceremony, Chairman P&D said that signing of MoU between Punjab government and UN World Food Programme is very important and good endeavour to formalise a strong agreement between WFP and Punjab government for better co-ordination and extended cooperation with the government departments like school education, food, health, Punjab Social Protection Authority and Punjab Disaster Management Authority (PDMA).

This MoU would help in making Punjab as a resilient and food secure province. Punjab government was committed and trying its best efforts to make the province Zero Hunger up to 2030. Government would provide technical assistance to the UN World Food Programme to implement this project.

Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif during the meeting with the WFP Executive Board Mission expressed his keen interest in jointly working more closely with UN WFP, Sahoo said.

He further said this is an opportunity for both Punjab government and UN WFP to give outline details and nature of their collaboration under the existing and upcoming new WFP-GoP project 2016-18.

Punjab government is giving priority on emergency preparedness, nutrition and strategic grain reserves, with a cross cutting capacity development and augmentation approach. While addressing the ceremony, Dr Shabana Haider, Member Health P&D said that good partnership between the government and World Food Programme has long history and United Nations WFP has been providing the support to address the issues of food security and malnutrition under its various ongoing programmes and projects in the province.

Under this MoU these activities would be progressively handed over to the Punjab government at all levels while capability enhancement within relevant line departments would also take place over the duration of the project.

At the end, Country Director United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Lola Castro while speaking on the occasion said that through the 3-years project Protracted Relief and Rehabilitation Operation (PRRO2016-2018), WFP would work together with Punjab government to achieve food security and nutrition goals and build resilience among the most vulnerable population through provision of technical support and capacity building initiatives.

She also said that the food reserves have become critical areas for attention due to persistent threat and repeated natural disasters in order to ensure food security as well as to offset supply shocks or spikes in demand, and facilitate humanitarian response during emergencies. She recommended Punjab government for continued generous contributions to WFP.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/33433/>

## GOVERNMENT TO BRING POVERTY LEVEL TO MINIMUM LEVEL: DAR

Business Recorder April 8, 2016

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has said that the government will bring poverty level to minimum within next few years through economic development, overcoming energy shortage and job creation, adding that poverty reduction was the priority of the government. Speaking at a seminar titled "Poverty estimation methodology, poverty in Pakistan and understanding the trends and the way forward," here on Thursday he said procedure to estimate poverty has been amended and now non-edible items are also clubbed with edible items to estimate poverty.

He said health and improvement in standard of living have also been made part of poverty estimation. He said the government has taken numerous steps for reduction in poverty and the welfare of the common man. He said the government has increased BISP amount to 107 billion rupees to eradicate poverty from the society.

He said poverty ratio has declined to 9.3 percent in 2014-14, which was at 34.7 percent in 2001-02. He said record tax collection stood at Rs 2103 billion in first nine months of the current fiscal year, which is a great achievement of the government.

Ishaq Dar said that Pakistan has seen an exceptional decline in poverty in the last fifteen years. The Finance Minister said that due to prudent economic policies of the government, the poverty ratio has been showing downward trend and in future, it would further decline to the lowest level.

Ishaq Dar said the country has been put on the path of economic development, adding that comprehensive planning has been done in the energy sector. "Within next two years we will add 10,000 megawatts of electricity into the system we are working on different energy projects which after the completion will add a total 25,000 megawatt, of which 10,000MW would be added into the system by 2018", he maintained.

The Finance Minister said 35 out of 46 billion dollars of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will be spent through private sector and completion of these projects will help generate employment opportunities and help grow the economic activities in the country.

He said now Pakistan is becoming a favourite destination for the international companies. Companies from Saudi Arabia and Qatar are keen to invest in Pakistan. Particularly, Kuwait is interested in energy sector in the country.

When asked whether Pakistan is going for another programme of IMF or not, the minister replied, “The country does not need another programme,” and added that “we have to do a lot of work to sustain the current achievements”. He said that no body will be allowed to derail the current growth. He said that he is leaving on April 12 to attend the World Bank-IMF Spring meetings in Washington.

Country Director of the World Bank Pochumuthu Illangovan, donors’ representatives and experts in poverty estimation issues, senior government officials also attended the seminar. Speaking on the occasion Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal reiterated that bringing down poverty to zero level in coming years was the target of the government and it has adopted pro-poor policies, which includes public spending, enhancing economic growth rate and further strengthening social safety nets.

“The issue of poverty estimation was lingering on since 2008 and various steps were taken to resolve this issue. We have incorporated the suggestions of all these experts in our work. Moreover, we also sought advice of renowned poverty and development Gurus like Martin Ravallion and John Gibson to review our findings and they all endorsed us” Iqbal added.

He said that head count poverty was computed in Pakistan in 2001 and since then the ground reality has changed altogether as many structural reforms were put in place like liberalisation, social safety nets, increase in remittances and natural calamities.

Pakistan did not reset poverty breaches threshold of 10 percent every country rest it and we are no exception. According to 2001 data current poverty is 9.3 percent and therefore it needs resetting, he maintained. He said that after taking the charge of Planning Commission, he had decided to capitalise on opportunity of resetting and bringing it in harmony with socio-economic realities, development policies, and massive foreign investment.

Iqbal further said Pakistan needed to choose from reference group, measure of welfare (calories), and method and the government have chosen 10-40% of distribution as reference group, 2350 calories as minimum welfare measure and cost of basic needs as method. Using 2013-2014 data head count poverty comes out to be 29.5%. In monetary terms poverty line comes out to be Rs 3,030 per adult equivalent per month, he added.

Setting aside politics, this means that we are committing ourselves to a greater challenge because continuing with 2001 poverty line would have tagged roughly 20 million people as poor and resetting raises it to 60 million, so we are raising bar for ourselves, he said. He said the government has strengthened the social safety nets and is trying to create more opportunities for everyone. Pakistan Vision-2025 has promised a better living for everyone.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-and-economy/189:pakistan/33456:government-to-bring-poverty-level-to-minimum-level:-dar?date=2016-04-08>

‘ONE NEEDS TO GET IN THAR TO DESIGN A WAY OUT OF ITS PROBLEMS’

The Express Tribune, April 10th, 2016.

Zubair Ashraf

KARACHI: While the situation in Thar often becomes the topic of discussion at various forums due to the high death toll of its children and clouds of famine hovering over the land, Dr Sono Khangharani believes that to find solutions, one needs to ‘get in Thar’, which is a ‘highly vegetated area’.

Dr Khangharani, a community development specialist native to the place in question, was speaking to a session on the health crises in Tharparkar on Saturday at Habib University. Dr Shaikh Tanveer Ahmed of the non-governmental organisation (NGO), Health and Nutrition Development Society (HANDS), and Dr Shereen Nerajo, special health secretary in the Sindh government, were the other two panellists.

Poverty, illiteracy, poor education system, malnutrition, lack of development, health facilities and other issues will make a list of problems out there in Thar but, first, there is a need to understand its root causes, said Dr Khangharani. No universal development programme can cure or address the problems that surface in the area unless it takes into account the lifestyle and cultures of the indigenous people, he said.

“To understand what the problems actually are and where they are rooted in, one needs to get in there, correspond with the community and help them design a way out,” he said, adding that the native people were willing to introduce positive changes in their lives.

Describing Thar, Dr Khangharani said that it is not a desert. “It is, on the contrary, a highly vegetated area, depending on the nature’s showers,” he said.

Like its diverse culture, its problems are also multifaceted, he remarked, tracing the area’s history back to some 4,000 years ago, when, according to him, people from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Thatta migrated to Thar as the area hosted vast green lands. The area’s topography and demography changed with time and, in the past 1,100 years, around 70 drought cycles were recorded, in which around one million people died.

A major shift came in the year 2000, when the then military-run government declared Thar a ‘free zone’ and the development of infrastructure began, he said. “Today, the third largest coal reserves of 1.2 billion tons has been found in Thar and it also has 120 salt mines that can meet the whole country’s demand.”

During the session, Dr Ahmed of HANDS presented numbers from researches conducted by different authorities and his NGO. In Thar, the infant mortality rate was 75 for every 1,000 birth, and 43.7% of the children were growth-stunted. He attributed these problems to a lack of basic health facilities.

Government representative Dr Nerajo said that collective effort was needed to bring change. “Small efforts can bring about big changes in society,” she said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1081852/finding-solutions-one-needs-to-get-in-thar-to-design-a-way-out-of-its-problems/>

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## May 2016

**NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 23rd TO MAY 29th 2016**

**PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY VITAL FOR POVERTY REDUCTION**

Dawn, May 23rd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Climate Change Syed Abu Akif on Sunday said stemming the loss of biodiversity was vital for the poverty reduction and economic sustainability.

He pledged support to provincial governments and private organisations to protect biodiversity. The official was speaking at a three-day national awareness and training workshop on “Biodiversity conservation, access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of their benefits under the United Nations Nagoya Protocol.”

“We must realise that the loss of biodiversity in all parts of the country has increased alarmingly and many wildlife and plant species are on the verge of extinction,” Mr Akif added.

The event coincided with the International Day for Biological Diversity that was also celebrated by the climate change ministry to highlight the role of biodiversity conservation for poverty reduction and achieving the United Nations' 17 sustainable development goals. The goals were adopted on September 25 last year and are to be achieved by 2030.

The theme of the day this year was 'Mainstreaming biodiversity, sustaining people and their livelihoods.'

The workshop and the biodiversity day event were organised by the ministry in partnership with the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) under its GIZ Biodiversity Khyber Pakhtunkhwa project and German Cooperation Organisation.

Mr Akif added: "We must understand that biodiversity is the foundation for the life and for the essential services provided by ecosystems. It ensures people's livelihoods and sustainable development in all realms of socio-economic activity, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism."

The gathering was informed that Pakistan provided habitats for 188 mammal species, of which six were endemic and 20 threatened with extinction. There are 666 bird species of which 25 are endangered. As many as 174 reptile species are found in the country, 13 of them ranked as endemic species. The reptiles include 14 turtles, one crocodile, 90 lizards and 65 species of snakes. Besides, there are 22 amphibians, nine of them declared endemic. Total 198 fresh water fish species exist in the country and 29 of them are endemics. So far, more than 5,000 species of invertebrates have been identified. In addition, there are over 5,700 species of flowering plants with over 400 species endemic in the country.

The country is also home to 26 national parks, 96 wildlife sanctuaries and 93 game reserve areas.

Other speakers said the increasing population, spontaneous, reckless urbanisation, deforestation and over-exploitation of natural resources were the main causes of the biodiversity loss.

The inspector general of forests, climate change ministry, Syed Mahmood Nasir, said biodiversity was an important cross-cutting issue in the 17 sustainable development goals.

"It is critical that we make progress on mainstreaming biodiversity and transforming how societies value and manage it," said Mr Nasir.

Director biodiversity Raja Naeem Ashraf talked about the draft National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

He said the draft plan aimed at checking the biodiversity loss by conserving and protecting the wildlife and plant species, restoring ecosystems and promoting sustainable use of natural resources.

Wolfgang Hesse, the policy adviser of GIZ, spoke on the importance of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1260111>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 16TH TO MAY 22ND 2016

NEW POVERTY SURVEY TO BE LAUNCHED SOON: MARVI

Business Recorder, May 17, 2016

Minister of State and Chairperson BISP MNA Marvi Memon has said that a new poverty survey would be conducted soon across the country, adding that improved law and order situation in tribal region would be helpful for the BISP to work for welfare of downtrodden population in a better way. She said it would be ensured that no deserving person is left out in new poverty survey.



She further said that door to door approach would also be adopted to make the new poverty survey accurate and dynamic. The State Minister expressed these views while visiting the BISP Tehsil office and Mujahid town in Frontier Region (FR) Lakki Marwat and the village of Sar Garhay Muhammad Khan, here on Monday.

The last poverty survey conducted in 2010 under the previous government did not cover several hard areas of FATA including Frontier Regions. The BISP, under the leadership of Marvi Memon, is committed to updating the NSER that covers every area of the country keeping in view all the factors like accessibility, terrain and security situation.

The pilot phase of the new survey is starting from mid-year in 15 districts and a tribal agency. In her meetings with PML-N District President Shafiullah Khan Begukhel, Tehsil Nazim Hidayatullah Khan, political workers of PML-N and JUI-F, tribal elders, local government representatives and administration, the Chairperson BISP urged them to support the survey teams, and discussed mechanisms for result-oriented re-survey.

She directed the local administration to prepare detailed account of villages in the area for effective identification of the poor. The women of FR Lakki welcomed Chairperson BISP and acknowledged her visit being the first high level visit by any lady minister in the history of Pakistan. They highlighted their problems and shared their concerns.

The chairperson BISP assured Lakki women of full assistance and said that the number of payment points would be increased in the area to facilitate the local women. She reiterated that as per the directions of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, every deserving woman would be part of the updated NSER ensuring empowerment, dignity and means of life for them.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-and-economy/189:pakistan/46629:new-poverty-survey-to-be-launched-soon-marvi/?date=2016-05-17>

#### RICH-POOR GAP WIDENING

Business Recorder, May 18, 2016

M Ziauddin

Macroeconomic stability is a highly desirable goal for any country, especially for those which suffer from chronic resource shortage and whose industrial potential is constrained in the confines of sunset sectors like sugar and low value textile goods and whose agricultural potential continues to remain in the profligate and decadent grip of feudal aristocracy which as a class has been lording over countries like Pakistan for decades.

The age-old trick in the hands of the ruling elite is to feed the nation at large during the annual budget making season with feel-good stories that the multilateral donors like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the lender of last resort, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), readily provide on request to keep the debtor coming back for more and more dole to be spent on the import of unnecessary goods from important member countries which no one in the world wants to buy and; at times to get the recipient to promote the global political interests of these very powerful member countries such as the US, UK, Germany and France.

Another feel good story of the season is about remittances. As usual these have already increased significantly. But what is noteworthy here is the significantly long jumps that remittances from the UAE have been taking year after year lately despite the fact that job opportunities in the Gulf region have been stagnating since the financial crisis of 2008. These remittances are over and above the investments the Pakistanis have been making in real estate in Dubai and Abu Dhabi since at least 2009.

Corruption money is smuggled to these economically 'free-for-all' countries through a number of routes- sea, air and over land and part of it comes back whitened in the shape of remittances for use in legitimate business in Pakistan but the bulk is kept out and invested in real estate. Another feel good story that is circulated by the officials during the budget season is the government's determination to start broadening the tax base by next fiscal year (which never happens) and its plans to phase out another batch of tax-exempting Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs) from the next fiscal year.

Such decisions even if taken at the time of budget announcement are invariably withdrawn subsequently on pressure from politically powerful lobbies. However, the most interesting feel good story is about what the IMF thinks about Pakistan's current state of the economy and the good tidings that the Fund has as a result of such remarkable achievement (made possible in recent times by a steep decline in world oil prices) of the official economic managers released the tranche due around this time of the year.

There is no country on the face of this earth which after having been treated by 'Dr IMF' had survived economically. Most of the time the doctor's diagnosis itself goes off the mark by miles. But even if it had read the disease correctly its one cure-fit-all diseases has only been worsening the ailment. So, while macroeconomic stability is a highly desirable goal yet by the time a country succeeds in achieving this goal it invariably ends up with resource constraints becoming even more chronic and the unemployment rate shooting through the ceiling.

Indeed, the economic policies being followed over the last several years have facilitated a handful of Pakistanis to corner almost the entire national wealth as well as the sources that generate it. This is happening due mainly to the 'neo-liberal' economic policies that we have been forced to follow since mid-1980s by the proponents of the infamous Washington Consensus.

The most devastating side-effect of these policies has been the emergence of an enormous and constantly expanding inequality gap between the rich and the poor. Meanwhile, this policy of minimal government interference and free market forces hyped as a guarantee for social justice has reduced the state to a skeleton incapable of formulating a way out.

Eminent economists the world over do seem to recognise the malaise but they are not yet willing to come out of their denial mode as most seem to have deluded themselves into believing that the 'free market' forces would eventually dispense social justice and reduce inequality. Some local independent economists of international repute who have studied the ups and downs of Pakistan's economy from close quarters seem to have come to the conclusion that the inequality gap would continue to widen unabated unless land reforms are introduced without any further loss of time and concurrently all incomes irrespective of their sources are brought into direct tax net.

The ownership of agricultural land has been identified besides property and financial assets to be the primary manifestation of inequality in Pakistan. Small farmers with less than 5 acres of land constitute as much as 65% of the farming population in Pakistan, but own only 19% of the farm land.

There are about 26,000 farmers only (0.4% of total) who own as much as 14% of the land. Large landlords have preferential access to irrigation water and own tractors, tube-wells and other agricultural equipment. And since they also wield enormous political power (Majority of MNAs/MPAs are large landowners, especially in Punjab and Sindh) they have successfully frustrated all attempts to introduce land-reforms and have also seen to it that their incomes continue to remain outside the tax net.

Furthermore, the top 20% of population accounts for almost 52% of property income while the top one per cent of bank depositors account for 80% of the deposits. Banks extend 77% of the credit to the top one per cent of borrowers. There are an estimated one million shareholders of publicly quoted companies.

The market capitalisation amount is part of the wealth of these one million individuals. Family ownership of companies still dominates the corporate world making them too vulnerable to the vagaries of the market. These wholly family owned corporate entities, in order to offset the effects of such risks to their incomes and assets, indulge in tax evasion and pilfer public utilities. Lobbyists of big business buy political influence to ensure governments, no matter what kind, keep making 'business friendly' taxation policies.

Meanwhile the incidence of poverty in the country is rising steeply. And due to continued underinvestment on the people, especially in education and health, the rate of improvement of the Human Development Index of Pakistan is estimated to be slowing down considerably.

One way of taking care of the immediate hurdles in the way of liberating the national economy from the clutches of 'neo-liberal' policies is by introducing a tax policy focusing on more progressive direct taxation with the key areas of focus on agricultural income, property and unearned capital income from financial assets; eliminating regional disparities, an issue to be tackled by NFC and Provincial Finance Commission (PFC). The PFC will have to design an appropriate revenue-sharing formula to tackle intra-regional inequality.

One very quick way of reducing inequality could be: 1. To focus on maximum employment in potential sectors like agriculture, rural development, small scale manufacturing and construction while making development allocation; 2. Take in hand social protection policies, especially designed to help workers, women, youth and minorities; 3. Fixing appropriate pricing of agricultural inputs, support prices for inputs and income supplement programmes and; 4. Allocating higher share of public expenditure to social services, especially education and health.

<http://www.brecorder.com/articles-a-letters/187:articles/46859:rich-poor-gap-widening/?date=2016-05-18>

#### NEW POVERTY SURVEY WILL BE TRANSPARENT: MARVI

Bussiness Recorder, May 19, 2016

The performance of the present government would make PML (N) win the next elections. Confused opposition should concentrate on public service in their respective areas of power rather than mudslinging. This was stated by Minister of State and Chairperson BISP MNA Marvi Memon in her address to the local representatives, notables and beneficiaries during her visit to Mirpur (AJK).

On the occasion, Chairperson reiterated that the new poverty survey would be transparent and BISP would put in hard efforts to make it the best in the world. Mirpur was ignored in the last survey conducted in 2010 under previous government. This time it would get its due share. Chairperson BISP is visiting the pilot phase districts of new poverty survey to sensitise the masses on National Socio Economic Registry update (NSER).

In this connection she visited Divisional Office BISP Mirpur, Nangi and New Mirpur City accompanied by PML (N) leaders Chaudhry Ijaz Raza and Chaudhry Saeed. Pilot phase of new poverty survey will start after Ramazan followed by national roll out in January 2017.

Marvi Memnon further added that she is thankful to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister for entrusting her with the most sacred responsibility of representing the poorest of the poor. She is proud to lead the vulnerable women as these women represent untapped potential of the beloved land and BISP is investing in them so that they may graduate out of poverty and contribute to economy.—PR

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-and-economy/189:pakistan/47231:new-poverty-survey-will-be-transparent-marvi/?date=2016-05-19>

#### DAR HIGHLIGHTS GOVT'S ROLE IN UPLIFTING POVERTY

The Express Tribune, May 19th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Since assuming responsibilities, the present government has focused on reaching out to the most deserving segments of the population in underserved areas, said Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. He stated this during a meeting with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Vice President Michael Mordasini.

A statement issued said that during the meeting, Mordasini apprised the Finance Minister about the current profile of IFAD projects in Pakistan and said that the organisation, with its fundamental aim to combat rural poverty by promoting rural development, had come a long way since starting its operations in 1978.

He said that IFAD's strategic objective was to assist the governments in providing people in rural areas with the skills, services and technologies that would enable them to increase productivity; and to build and support local capacity

through the promotion of participatory development processes. He said that to achieve these objectives, IFAD's strategy focuses on eradicating poverty in vulnerable and remote areas, achieving community participation and identifying opportunities for innovation.

Dar on the occasion cited the examples of the National Income Support Programme through which government had successfully reached out to 5.3 million beneficiaries while simultaneously enhancing its budgetary allocation from Rs40 billion in 2013 to Rs107 billion in fiscal year 2015-16.

He also informed IFAD Vice President that Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Karandaaz Pakistan (funded by UK's Department for International Development) and Germany's Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) Bank have recently signed the Shareholders' Agreement for establishment of Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company (PMIC).

He said PMIC was one of the key milestones in the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) launched in May last year. He said it is the goal of the government to meet the needs and aspirations of the poor and marginalised.

The minister also highlighted the noticeable increase in agriculture credit.

He also invited IFAD to support activities in agriculture research and innovations for enhancing per-acre yield.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1106147/dar-highlights-govts-role-in-uplifting-poverty/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 9TH TO MAY 15TH 2016

CHINA TO HELP PAKISTAN REDUCE POVERTY: LOU

Business Recorder, May 09, 2016

Chinese Finance Minister Lou Jiwei disclosed that China will donate 100 million US dollars to the 11th replenishment of the Asian Development Fund to help low-income members of Asian Development Bank (ADB) including Pakistan in reducing poverty. AIIB and ADB are already discussing projects for co-financing in the road and water sectors. The first of these projects is expected to be Pakistan's M4 highway project, a 64 km stretch of motorway connecting Shorkot to Khanewal in Punjab Province.

The two institutions will undertake regular high-level consultations between them and joint data collection to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the COP21 climate agreement, according to a press release by AIIB.

ADB signed a memorandum of understanding with Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) this week to strengthen cooperation for sustainable growth. China will support ADB as always and deepen its all-round cooperation with ADB, Lou added while addressing ADB's Board of Governors' meeting in Frankfurt.

According to the agreement, AIIB and ADB will strengthen cooperation, including co-financing, at the strategic and technical levels on the basis of complementarity, value added, institutional strengths and comparative advantages, and mutual benefit.

Chinese Finance Minister Lou Jiwei on Wednesday called for speeding up structural reforms to enhance the flexibility and resilience of the economy.

Speaking at the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of Asian Development Bank (ADB) here, Lou said the world economy is still faced with severe challenges and countries should speed up their structural reforms to enhance the flexibility and resilience of their economies and foster sustainable growth by means of innovation.

As an important institution of multilateral development, ADB should adapt itself to changes in a proactive way and work out a more forward-looking development strategy that includes cooperation between high and middle-income countries, Lou said.

He maintained that ADS should develop innovative policies, improve the quality of its projects, improve its governance structure and raise institutional strength, comprehensively expand its partnership with existing multilateral development aid agencies and new institutions, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS Development Bank.

He also suggested ADB strengthen its partnership with private institutions through the public-private partnerships (PPP).

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of ADB and the 30th anniversary of China's cooperation with ADB.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-stories/0:/44167:china-to-help-pakistan-reduce-poverty-lou/?date=2016-05-09>

#### NEW POVERTY SURVEY: BISP TO LAUNCH PILOT PHASE

The Express Tribune, May 11th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Following the best international practices, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is set to initiate the pilot phase of its new poverty survey in 15 districts and a tribal agency by the middle of this year. In order to create awareness among the masses regarding the survey, minister of state and chairperson

BISP MNA Marvi Memon visited Chakwal and its adjacent villages of Mureed, Bhoun and Keryala today. According to a statement released on Tuesday, the chairperson BISP is undertaking a vigorous beneficiary outreach campaign so that the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) is updated in the best possible manner and leads the world in the identification of poor.

In this context, she has already visited Sukkar, Jacobabad, Naseerabad, Dera Murad Jamali, Qila Saifullah and Turbat in the past few days. These areas are included in the pilot phase of the new poverty survey of BISP. She also urged the poor women to benefit from the prime minister's loan scheme to initiate the entrepreneurial activities and become financially independent.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1101270/new-poverty-survey-bisp-to-launch-pilot-phase/>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 25th TO MAY 1st 2016

#### POVERTY ALLEVIATION: EXPERT SAYS MICROFINANCE NOT EFFECTIVE IN ALL GROUPS

The Express Tribune, April 25th, 2016.

Maryam Usman

ISLAMABAD: Microfinance may be an effective tool to empower people and alleviate poverty but it is also further overburdening people, who suffer from extreme poverty, says an expert from Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

Talking to The Express Tribune, PPAF official Samia Liaquat Ali Khan said the alleviation fund looks at the poverty scorecard that the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) used to identify households that are under a certain threshold.

For example, anyone who is facing poverty, would be anywhere from 0 to 23 on the poverty score-card. Within these bands, the lower ranges from 0 to 18 refer to the ultra-poor and vulnerable households, which need to have support in ways different from the households who are better off than them.

She said microfinance operations support those households, which are ranked 20 or above on the score-card. “Microfinance becomes really that lynchpin that allows them to take a foothold in the mainstream economy and to improve themselves as a result.”

However, she said offering micro-finance to people on the lower ranges of the scorecard means putting burden of debt on vulnerable households, who are not able or do not have the kind of income stream coming in that help them repay that debt.

This was one of the reasons why the PPAF decided that microfinance clients must be above a certain level of poverty so they cannot be the ultra-vulnerable or poor.

“But for those households which fall into that cap – and there are a lot of households that the BISP has also identified – anyone under that point would be eligible for social protection from the BISP, which is Rs1,500 a month,” she said.

In their research, she said, they found that the little stipend goes to support consumption though it does not cover the family’s full cost. “It is used for consumption-smoothing such as extra food on the table, maybe some little bit of healthcare.”

“Fifteen hundred rupees is fine and it should be provided as social protection,” she said. “Every country needs to have a social protection programme but there has to be some push that is trying to get them out of poverty.”

According to Samia, the poverty-graduation approach is showing results and is something that needs to be focused on. “We’ve realised that the consumption-smoothing stipend that the BISP provides, should be provided. There is a need for that, but there is a need for that for the poorest households,” she said.

Referring to a global study on poverty graduation published last year, she said: “We piloted this asset transfer programme in certain coastal areas of Sindh where there were 2,000 households. The results that came out show an increase in consumption of the households, an increase in the wealth of their households and the income of the households,” Samia said.

Interestingly, there was also an improvement in the psycho-social status of the households. “So the perceived status that these households had, had improved. So their own perception of how they were regarded by their neighbours or by the village members and that also links to more confidence and self-empowerment as well.”

Alongside, the team found that women must become primary agents for change in their communities. “We have a scheme that we are running with the government of Pakistan – it is called the prime minister’s interest-free loan scheme that is interest being provided to households who are not ready for the regular micro-finance but are looking for some interest-free loans,” she added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1091096/poverty-alleviation-expert-says-microfinance-not-effective-in-all-groups/>

## URBAN POVERTY

Dawn, April 26th, 2016

Neil Buhne

WHEN I first arrived in Pakistan in 1990, there were 120 million people. The population in urban areas was 33m. When I returned five months ago, there were 70 to 80m more Pakistani citizens, and the population in urban areas more than doubled to 80m people. The bulk of this growth is characterised by an increasing number of people living in slums. The urban landscape today is predominantly shaped by families squatting in substandard housing.

This alarming rise in urban poverty represents a current and future risk for Pakistan. It is a current risk because the paucity of public services means that the millions living in slums do not have access to the education and health

services which are both their right and the foundation for any meaningful development to take place. Their situation is often worsened by threats to their human security from increased level of crimes, sometimes accompanied by armed violence.

It is also a future risk for Pakistan. The country has a young population with over 50pc being under 25. A similar proportion defines the slum occupancy. If current conditions do not improve, young people will continue to face daunting social and economic challenges with fewer opportunities to break the vicious circle of abject poverty.

This puts them at risk of being involved in crimes, extremism and drugs thus destabilising the social fabric of society and its economy. There is also the risk that they will live in places where a weak sense of community hampers rather than helps their well-being.

It is the children and mothers that will feel the pinch of urban poverty the most. In a recent report I read, children under five of the urban poor are twice as likely to die as the urban rich. Similarly, the average survival rate of children in rural areas is better than their counterparts in the slums. Obesity in children will increasingly capture the public health sector as the next big challenge.

The migration of families from rural to urban areas affects their food consumption patterns. Children become deprived of necessary nutritional values with the increased intake of processed food, high energy, sugar and refined grains fat-based as they abandon their traditional sources of intake from 'home-grown' production.

But there is still hope and a strong resolve. With the right policies and with the right programmes implemented in the right ways, these slums can be transformed into thriving communities, that would provide opportunities for development and community growth.

The experience from the Orangi Pilot Programme in Karachi 25 years ago, which is a best practice adopted and applied worldwide, shows what can be done when people are given the space to organise themselves to improve conditions in their 'slum' communities, and when the government provides a conducive and enabling environment for this.

The government has recognised the importance of urban development in Pakistan and encapsulates this in its Vision 2025 which says, "The challenge for Pakistan will be to address the existing challenges of the large urban centres while planning ahead for the continued migration towards cities".

It lays out a vision for urban development and smart cities linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly to Goal 11 of "making cities and human settlements, inclusive safe, resilient and sustainable".

The first specific target for this global goal is: "By 2030 ensure access for all to adequate safe and affordable housing and basic service and upgrade slums." In order to meet this target, there is a need to work across a number of areas and in an integrated manner — including education, health, jobs, energy efficiency, and responsible consumption and adapting to climate change — among others.

When this target is met, the benefits to all the people of Pakistan will be enormous with transformative changes taking place that converts the risks into opportunities for equitable and sustainable human development.

Everyone has to be involved with the government taking the lead to help transform these slums into thriving communities. More specifically, this will involve implementing national plans, and leadership at all levels, complementing community action. International experience shows this works only when there is such national resolve.

To complement this, the UN team in Pakistan can build partnerships, provide technical expertise and assistance, and support implementation of programmes. For instance, UN-Habitat is the UN agency specialising in issues of urban development and can play a crucial role, along with a number of other agencies that have the necessary expertise to help across the range of diverse needs.

Improving conditions in slums is a broad development challenge. It only requires a strong and collective resolve where all people work together at the national, provincial, local and community levels to transform the challenges of urban poverty into opportunities and well-being for all.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1254363>

#### OUR NEW POVERTY ESTIMATE

The Express Tribune, April 29th, 2016.

Poverty is easy enough to recognize by those who experience its multidimensional deprivations on a daily basis, or even by those who invariably confront its glaring pervasiveness. However, measuring poverty is not as straightforward as we might think. The number of poor people can shrink or expand drastically by changing the definition of what it means to be poor.

Policymakers in our country are fairly apt at reducing poverty by altering how poverty should be measured. During the Musharraf era, for example, we saw an evident demonstration of poverty being drastically reduced based on faulty estimates, which claimed a decline in the poverty incidence from nearly 35 percent in 2000-01 to around 23 percent in 2004-05.

Most development economists and practitioners refuted the possibility of Pakistan having actually reduced one-third of its poverty within a period of only four years. Yet, the government of the day continued to tout these figures to gain political mileage.

Given the tendency to make enthusiastic claims about poverty reduction by trying to tweak how poverty should be measured, it was a surprise to note the recent change in the definition of poverty, motivated by the imperative of obtaining a more accurate picture of ground realities. To do so, Pakistan has shifted from a poverty formula based on food energy intake to one based on the cost of meeting basic needs.

Under this new methodology, the poverty line has been raised by Rs650, and is now set at around Rs3,000 a month. While Rs3,000 is still quite a stringent criterion for a poverty line, at least the new measure goes beyond considering the amount of money people need for buying a basic amount of food energy, and tries to incorporate some non-food expenditures in its calculation.

Using this newer formula, 30 per cent of Pakistanis could be considered poor (in 2013-14), whereas according to the older definition, only 10 per cent of the country would have been categorised as being poor.

It is encouraging to see the current government taking the politically sensitive step of changing the measure of poverty to admit that poverty is much higher than the ridiculously low numbers being cited earlier.

Yet, experts point out that even this new definition falls short in terms of providing an accurate picture of the extent of deprivation in our country. Based on the UNDP's Multidimensional Poverty Index, which complements traditional income-based poverty measures by capturing lack of access to adequate living standards, education, health, and services, poverty in Pakistan is around 44 per cent.

While conceding to the new definition of poverty, the government has been quick to point out that poverty is decreasing, even according to the new basic needs definition.

However, development economists who endorse the official view that poverty is, in fact, decreasing, are hard-pressed to explain why other major indicators of poverty, such as malnutrition or infant and maternal mortality rates remain so alarmingly high.

On the other hand, our present government lacks the ability to tax its citizens to create a sustainable base for effective service delivery and social safety nets. New, innovative programmes for urban populations are nowhere to be seen.



Rural poverty is still a major challenge. Rural development policies such as corporate farming and computerising land records will also do nothing for those who own no land and are working as sharecroppers or agricultural labourers at ridiculously low wages.

Adopting market-driven donor prescriptions such as the provision of small loans at high interest rates as the fix-all elixir to the national malaise of both urban and rural poverty, does not work. Building expensive infrastructure will also do little to address the underlying and deep-seated causes of marginalisation and exclusion.

In order to make a serious dent in the prevailing poverty in our country, government officials and international donors need to relinquish the conventional wisdom of investing more in the haves in order to generate more growth, since its benefits do not sufficiently trickle down to the have-nots.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1093694/our-new-poverty-estimate/>

#### **PUBLIC WELFARE: BISP BUDGET INCREASED BY RS65B: MARVI MEMON**

The Express Tribune, May 4th, 2016.

**SUKKUR:** Keeping in view the miseries of the poor, the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) government has increased the budget of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) from Rs40 billion to Rs105 billion.

BISP chairperson Marvi Memon announced this while addressing the beneficiaries of the programme on Tuesday afternoon.

Blaming the previous Pakistan Peoples Party-led government, she said that the BISP survey in 2008 was done on political basis, due to which thousands of poor people were left behind. In 2010, another survey was launched, which was completed in five years. The survey identified 5.2 million people who were in need of income support, she explained.

The PML-N government has increased the stipend by Rs200 per quarter and now the beneficiaries will get Rs4,700 per quarter instead of Rs4,500, she announced.

After Ramazan, a new pilot survey will be launched in 16 districts of Pakistan, including Sukkur, Jacobabad and Thatta. For this purpose, the old beneficiaries will be required to reapply, she said, stressing that this time the survey will not be conducted under any kind of political influence.

The new survey will be computerised to minimise errors. Besides, monitoring teams will be hired to oversee the work of the teams to ensure transparency. “We have tried to cover all loopholes,” she said.

This pilot survey will be completed in three months and next year another survey will be conducted in the remaining districts of Pakistan.

According to Memon, the PML-N wants to provide rights to the poor people of the country. “We endeavour to keep the process free from any politics and, therefore, all efforts are being [made] to ensure transparency,” she claimed.

Replying to a question about the Panama Papers controversy, she said that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has written a letter to the Chief Justice of Pakistan for forming a judicial commission to probe into the matter. So, she said, we have to wait and see instead of demanding resignation from the PM.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1096742/public-welfare-bisp-budget-increased-by-rs65b-marvi-memon/>

#### **CALL TO DECLARE AGRICULTURAL EMERGENCY IN COUNTRY**

Dawn, May 5th, 2016

HYDERABAD: Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) president Khalid Mehmood Khokhar has demanded that an 'agricultural emergency' be declared across the country and general sales tax (GST) on farm inputs be withdrawn immediately.

At a news conference at the press club on Wednesday, Mr Khokhar, who accompanied Sindh Abadgar Ittehad leader Nawab Zubair Talpur and others, said that Sindh should introduce one electricity unit one rate exclusive of all taxes for farm sector like Punjab.

He termed much trumpeted Prime Minister's Rs341 billion Kissan Package a mere jugglery of figures and said his organisation would hold a protest outside the Punjab Assembly on May 23 and invite Sindh growers to join the protest.

He criticised the Sindh government's subsidised tractor scheme and said it was marred by nepotism and appeared to have been launched only to appease parliamentarians instead of facilitating growers.

Mr Khokhar opposed trade with India till a level-playing field was available to Pakistani farmers in terms of subsidised farm inputs and free electricity which was available to their Indian counterparts.

He urged the Sindh government to declare agricultural emergency in the province and said the water distribution was a major issue without which farm sector could not survive. GST on farm inputs should be immediately withdrawn, he added.

He expressed disappointment over the fact that Sindh's farmers were paying Rs17 per unit for electricity against Punjab's Rs10 per unit exclusive of all taxes and said his organisation was ready to help Sindh growers should they move Islamabad High Court over this issue. He said that he was ready to consult Sindh's growers to hold a joint meeting with the federal government to settle inter-provincial water distribution issue and ask the government as to why Sindh was not supplied water from Mangla reservoir for its early Kharif sowing season.

Zubair Talpur supported PKI's May 23 protest and said that despite it being peak Kharif season Rohri and Nara canals were not flowing with sufficient water to irrigate tail-end areas where crops were dying.

If water was not released within a week growers would stage a sit-in outside Chief Minister House, he warned.

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.dawn.com/news/1256276>

#### PAKISTAN SEEKS A POVERTY-FREE ASIA-PACIFIC: DAR

The Express Tribune, May 5th, 2016.

FRANKFURT: Pakistan shares the Asian Development Bank (ADB) vision of a poverty free Asia-Pacific region, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said.

Regional connectivity and cooperation was a key pillar of ADB's policy and also one of the seven elements of Pakistan's Vision 2025, he said addressing the first business session of ADB annual meeting. "I renew my country's commitment in the realisation of ADB's vision of an Asia-Pacific region that is poverty-free," Dar said. Pakistan intends to expand its trade and investment links with the region in the East, West and Central Asia, he said.

Highlighting significant achievements during last two and a half years, the minister said Pakistan's economy had continued to demonstrate resilience to cope with security challenges, war against terrorism and consistent floods resulting from climate change.

Pakistan would soon move to a path of poverty reduction and improvement in other socio-economic indices, Dar said. The government highly appreciates the role of ADB in formulation of Country Partnership Strategy for the year 2015-19 that would focus on infrastructure development to help attract private investment, boost productivity and create jobs. "ADB has indicative assistance of \$4 billion for the three-years (2016-18)," Dar said.

Separately, Dar met Annette Dixon, Vice-President of the World Bank on the sidelines of the ADB's Annual Board of Governors Meeting.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1097549/pakistan-seeks-a-poverty-free-asia-pacific-dar/>

## DEATHS IN THARPARKAR: SENATE PANEL PRODS SINDH GOVT OVER CHILD MORTALITY

The Express Tribune, May 5th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary panel has expressed serious reservations over Sindh government's failure to prevent infant mortality due to insufficient food and medicines in its eastern Tharparkar district despite spending billions of rupees in relief activities.

Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights on Wednesday expressed its concerns during a briefing in which the Sindh government said it had released sufficient funds for the area over the last two years.

According to the figures provided by the Sindh government, a total amount of Rs4,193,905 million was released for distribution of wheat bags in the district. An additional Rs294.870 million was released for transportation of wheat and other miscellaneous expenditures.

The rehabilitation department was given Rs1,768.500 million for relief and rehabilitation activities. The health department was given Rs2,010.881 million for health and hygiene and Umerkot district was handed Rs1,953.131 million for the same purpose.

The finance department released a grand total of Rs10,273.267 million for fodder and vaccination of livestock. An amount of Rs5 billion was released for provision of clean drinking water, said the province.

However, Senator Mohsin Khan Leghari, who chaired the meeting, asked as to why the issue had not been resolved despite the expenditure cited by the Sindh government.

"This is not the first time that we are hearing about these issues in Thar. It is a continuous crisis and something really needs to be done to address it," he said.

Senator Sitara Ayaz highlighted the absence of disaster management authorities in the area. "If the money had actually been spent, the situation would not have been what it is today," she said.

Senator Nisar Muhammad lamented the fact that on the one hand the government was launching development projects worth billions of rupees and on the other, infants were losing lives due to malnutrition and unavailability to basic health facilities.

He called on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to visit Tharparkar on an emergency basis.

"Barring foreign donor agencies and NGOs, what role is the provincial and federal government playing to manage the crisis," he asked.

Members of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), who visited Tharparkar recently, said they had noticed an acute shortage of doctors and basic health facilities.

They said besides malnutrition, there is also no arrangement for checkup of expectant mothers; and resultantly there is a high incidence of neo-natal and post-natal deaths. They noted that there were only 14 ambulances available for the entire population of Mirpur, Umerkot and Tharparkar.

In view of the poor communication infrastructure and shabby state of road links, the team recommended mobile referrals for administration of medicines and immunisation for preventable diseases among women and children.

Representatives from the Sindh government cited illiteracy, early marriages and unskilled hospital staff as causes of premature births. They said 58 per cent population of the area was poor and 40 per cent children were malnourished.

The NCHR Balochistan member Fazila Aliani said it was due to bureaucratic negligence that Thar, where 40 per cent of Hindu population resides, was being overlooked. She said funds for infant care were also not satisfactory. The committee asked officials of the Sindh government to brief them on the details of the hefty expenditures incurred on Tharparkar.

The meeting also inquired about the progress in the arrest of the killers of Senator Nasreen Jalil's bodyguard. Jalil's bodyguard, Abid was targeted along with his friend, Attique, and daughter last month. It was informed that the culprits had not been traced so far.

Security officials also revealed that there were a total of 2,200 CCTV cameras installed by the city government in Karachi. However, almost half of the cameras were out-of-order while some CCTV cameras had also been stolen.

The committee was told that there was a plan to repair the dysfunctional cameras. In the next fiscal year, the tenders for these cameras will be floated. There is a requirement of over 10,000 camera to cover the whole city and this project will cost at least Rs4 billion, the committee was told.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1097576/deaths-in-tharparkar-senate-panel-prods-sindh-govt-over-child-mortality/>

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## June 2016

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 27TH TO JULY 2 ND 2016***

***BALUCHISTAN BUDGET 2016-17: POVERTY OFF THE RADAR***

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, June 27th, 2016

Nasir Jamal

Balochistan's share in the country's tax income has spiked by more than six times from Rs29bn to Rs182.6bn in the estimated provincial revenue receipts for the next fiscal year, following the implementation of the 7th National Finance award in 2010/2011.

Additionally, the province is also being reimbursed gas development surcharge arrears of Rs120bn outstanding since 1954 in equal annual installments of Rs12bn after the retrospective increase in gas and wellhead prices.

The increase in the provincial revenues has since helped it spike its development investment from its own resources by almost five times from a little above Rs13bn to Rs65bn next financial year.

But the hefty spike in its revenues has not helped the province escalate growth, bridge the social and economic infrastructure gaps or improve the quality of governance.

The quality of public service delivery remains poor and the coverage patchy in a province that covers 44pc of the country's land and three quarters of its coastline, and significantly large deposits of copper, gold, gas, coal, granite and other minerals.

Indeed, Balochistan has always lagged behind other provinces because of lack of adequate financial resources it requires to fill in the infrastructure gap. Its small population spread thinly over a very large area enormously raises the cost of providing services and jobs to the people.

On top of that, the province has been wracked by years of low-intensity Baloch insurgency and growing religious militancy that makes execution of the development projects a daunting task for the weak political coalition in Quetta. Yet these aren't the only factors constraining growth and development at the cost of its people.

The massive increase in Balochistan's income in the recent years has in fact brought to the fore other issues holding it back: ineffective governance and lack of competence and capacity to plan and execute development schemes. Sadly, the budget for the new financial year — like the previous ones — fails to address these issues.

“Political expediency of a coalition government has taken precedence over the wellbeing of the citizens of Balochistan, who continue to live in extreme poverty and without access to basic services,” a former Balochistan finance secretary commented on the Rs282bn provincial budget for 2016/2017 that carries a development outlay of just over Rs71bn (inclusive of above Rs6bn and a fiscal deficit of Rs36.48bn).

“People in most parts of the province are living without drinking water and electricity, our schools and colleges remain without teachers and facilities available to children in other provinces, and our hospitals don't have enough doctors or proper equipment,” said Wahid Shahwani, a human rights activist from Khuzdar.

This is despite purported development investments of billions of rupees on social and economic infrastructure in the province in the last six years.

“Poor development planning and implementation capacity, ineffective governance, and political pressure a weak coalition setup has to face mean that bulk of the resources will either be wasted or embezzled,” the former finance secretary argued, referring to National Accountability Bureau's corruption investigation into embezzlement of local government funds.

The previous provincial adviser on finance Mir Khalid Khan Langov and finance secretary Mushtaq Ahmed Raisani are in the custody of the anti-corruption agency, which recovered about Rs650 million in cash — both in local and foreign currencies and prize bonds — from the secretary's home last month.

The increased revenues are not enough to tackle infrastructure gaps and development issues facing the province. “You cannot improve public service delivery and leverage private investment in the province's mineral assets without strengthening your institutional capacity, developing human capital and improving laws, policies, regulations, etc.,” another bureaucrat who has worked in different positions in Balochistan in the past argued.

“The government must invest generously in governance to leverage financial and mineral assets to escalate growth, create jobs, and improve the quality and coverage of services,” he insisted. “At least half of the funds available for development are either wasted because of cost and time overruns, and corruption.

The government's inclination for launching new schemes without completing the ongoing projects with a view to retaining the support of the members of the provincial assembly, too, results in considerable losses besides adding to existing massive development throw-forward.”

Instead of doing some housekeeping, the Nawab Sanaullah Zehri's government is apparently pinning its hopes on foreign investments that it expects to flow into the troubled province after the completion of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. “CPEC will be a game changer for the province because it will soon emerge as a hub of regional commerce after completion of the project,” the Nawab said in his budget speech.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267429>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 20TH TO JUNE 26TH 2016  
LEFT TO STARVE

The Express Tribune, June 20th, 2016.

Ever since global warming became a widely recognised phenomenon, there have been dire predictions about the fate of humanity. For the people of Thar, the vagaries of uncertain weather patterns have had deadly consequences. For several years, Thar has been suffering from drought and drought-induced starvation.

The area has the highest under-five child mortality rate in Pakistan. While this has given the media ample opportunity to broadcast footage of starving children, it has not resulted in any concerted efforts to fix the grave issue on a long-term basis.

Year after year, women continue to give birth to babies with stunted growth and the number of lives cut short by suffering and hunger keeps on rising. While the food shortage has affected all residents of the region, its effects are made worse by local societal values.

A UN fact-finding mission has discovered that men are fed first and given more food as compared to women and children in the area. Combined with a diet short on protein, reduced number of meals due to food scarcity and lack of clean drinking water, the deaths of small children are inevitable.

They are born of underfed mothers and are underfed themselves throughout their brief lives. It doesn't help that there is little long-term planning to uplift the people of the region. Education and healthcare facilities are clearly inadequate and the programmes started to provide clean water and free food fail to reach the most destitute and needy.

The situation has deteriorated beyond the point of being salvaged by bags of wheat or handouts of a few thousand rupees per family. With traditional means of earning having evaporated with the water, the people of Thar have been left in the lurch. For women and children, it's even worse as they are dependent, have little mobility and even more likely to be left behind to suffer.

The Sindh government remains oblivious to their plight. This has to change otherwise the disastrous situation in Thar, especially for women and children, will continue to worsen.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1125902/left-to-starve/>

## MALNUTRITION BECOMING 'NEW NORMAL' AMID OBESITY BOOM: STUDY

Business Recorder, June 20, 2016

Malnutrition is becoming the “new normal” as rising rates of obesity across the world coincide with persistent undernutrition in many poorer countries, according to a major study released on Tuesday. The Global Nutrition Report says the number of people who are obese or overweight is rising almost everywhere, fuelling an increase in diabetes and other diseases.

Malnutrition covers a range of problems – from deficiencies in important vitamins and minerals for the undernourished to excessive levels of sugar, salt, fat or cholesterol in the blood for the obese.

At least 57 of the 129 countries studied were experiencing serious levels of both undernutrition and adult obesity, putting huge pressure on health services, said the study.

“We now live in a world where being malnourished is the new normal,” said Lawrence Haddad, senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute and co-author of the report.

“It is a world that we must all claim as totally unacceptable.”

The study found some progress was being made, with the number of stunted children under five declining on every continent except Africa and Oceania.

Stunted children grow up to be weaker than their well-nourished counterparts, with their brains and immune systems compromised.

But the report's authors said there had been too little progress in the fight against all forms of malnutrition.

Almost every country studied was falling behind in reducing levels of diabetes and of anaemia in women, for example.

One in 12 people globally now has diabetes and nearly two billion people are obese or overweight, according to the authors, who called for more funding for government initiatives on nutrition.

Their analysis found a \$70 billion global funding shortfall to meet 2025 milestones to tackle stunting, severe acute malnutrition and anaemia.

The report highlighted the cost of malnutrition, which it said was "the number one driver of the global burden of disease".

Africa and Asia lose 11 percent of gross domestic product every year due to malnutrition, it said.

Haddad said the key to success was political commitment.

"Where leaders in government, civil society, academia and business are committed – and willing to be held accountable – anything is possible," he said.

"Despite the challenges, malnutrition is not inevitable – ultimately, it is a political choice."

The Global Nutrition Report is an annual assessment of countries' progress in meeting global nutrition targets established by the World Health Assembly – the world's highest health policy body – in 2013.

These include a 40 percent reduction in the number of children under five who are stunted; a 50 percent reduction of anaemia in women of reproductive age; and a halt in the rise in the number of adults who are overweight, obese or suffering from type two diabetes.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/58722/>

39PC OF PAKISTANIS LIVE IN POVERTY; FATA, BALOCHISTAN WORST HIT

Dawn, June 21st, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Nearly 39 per cent of Pakistanis live in multidimensional poverty with the highest rates in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and Balochistan. Though the national poverty rates have dropped from 55 to 39pc since 2004.

According to Pakistan's first ever Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), launched on Monday, progress across different regions of the country is uneven. Poverty in urban areas is 9.3pc as compared to 54.6pc in rural areas. Disparities also exist across the provinces, it says.

The report says that over two-thirds of people in Fata (73pc) and Balochistan (71pc) live in multidimensional poverty. Poverty in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands at 49pc, Gilgit-Baltistan and Sindh at 43pc, Punjab at 31pc and Azad Jammu and Kashmir at 25pc.

At the district level, Larkana, Attock, Malakand, Toba Tek Singh and Hyderabad have made the most progress reducing absolute poverty headcount ratio by more than 32 percentage points.

In relative terms, the best performers were the districts of Islamabad, Attock, Jehlum, Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi.

On the other hand, some districts have experienced an increase in poverty incidence. In absolute and relative terms, the districts of Umerkot, Harnai, Panjgur, Killa Abdullah and Kashmore have witnessed the highest increase in incidence of poverty.

Deprivation in education contributes the largest share of 43pc to MPI followed by living standards which contributes nearly 32pc and health contributing 26pc. These findings further confirm that social indicators are very weak in Pakistan, even where economic indicators appear healthy.

The report found that the decrease in multidimensional poverty was slowest in Balochistan while it increased in several districts of Balochistan and Sindh during the past decade.

The MPI uses a broader concept of poverty than income and wealth alone. It reflects the deprivations people experience with respect to health, education and standard of living, and is thus a more detailed way of understanding and alleviating poverty.

Since its development by the OPHI and the UNDP in 2010, many countries, including Pakistan, have adopted this methodology as an official poverty estimate, complementing consumption or income-based poverty figures.

Speaking at the launch, Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Professor Ahsan Iqbal said that the reduction of multidimensional poverty was one of the core objectives of Pakistan's Vision 2025. He said that inclusive and balanced growth, which benefited everyone and especially the marginalised communities, was the government's priority and an essential thing for promoting harmony in society. The MPI is a useful instrument budgeting, resource allocation and inclusion in policy making.

Pakistan's MPI establishes baseline not for only Vision 2025, but also for Pakistan's progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and complements the consumption-based poverty estimates recently released by the government.

The UNDP Country Director, Marc-Andre Franche said: "We consider this a highly innovative approach because of its multi-faceted nature and the availability of estimates at the sub-national level. Multidimensional poverty provides useful analysis and information for targeting poverty, and reducing regional inequalities.

Many countries are using MPI to inform government priorities for planning and it is encouraging to see the government of Pakistan adopting the MPI to complement monetary poverty measure in Pakistan".

Director OPHI, Dr Sabina Alkire said: "Developed with input from all provinces, Pakistan's MPI is very robust and we are pleased to work alongside the very strong academic and policy community in Pakistan.

Pakistan's leadership will be of interest to over 40 other countries in the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network who are using multidimensional poverty measures in the Sustainable Development Goals," she said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266171>

BISP LAUNCHES POVERTY SURVEY, SAYS OFFICIAL  
The Express Tribune, June 21st, 2016.

Sehrish Wasif



ISLAMABAD: After a five-year hiatus, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has started updating the National Socio Economic Registry (NSER), a database containing complete information about the socioeconomic status of over 27 million households across the country.

NSER Deputy Director Muhammad Abu Bakar told The Express Tribune on Monday that it was one of the largest poverty surveys of its kind aimed at gathering updates and accurate information regarding the socioeconomic status of Pakistani people.

Information regarding health-related issues, skills of individual household members, food, utilities such as electricity, gas, fuel, microfinancing, access to justice and education, employment, etc, will be gathered through the NSER updates, he said. The survey was last conducted in 2010-11.

“Since 2010-11, a lot of changes have taken place as people have moved to other places, their financial statuses have been changed, there will be either an increase or decrease in their health problems among others. Therefore, this NSER update will help get the latest information about them,” said Abu Bakar.

In 2010-11, he said, the entire process of updating the NSER was completed at a cost of Rs6 billion. “This time it is estimated to cost Rs7-8 billion.”

Abu Bakar said the update activity has been started from Haripur and gradually it will cover all districts that have been targeted after Ramazan. Sharing details, he said the NSER update would be carried out in two phases – a pilot phase and the national rollout.

In the pilot phase, 16 districts – four in Punjab, three each in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan and one each in Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK – and one agency of Fata have been shortlisted based on various parameters, he said. “Twelve districts will be covered through a door-to-door census approach.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1126698/bisp-launches-poverty-survey-says-official/>

## IMAGINING POVERTY

Dawn, June 23rd, 2016

Haris Gazdar

THERE are two views about the economics of poverty reduction. One, that economic growth will trickle down and reduce poverty. Two, that there is no automatic trickle-down and growth may or may not be inclusive. It depends on which sectors grow, whether growth creates new and better jobs, and whether the poor are able to take advantage of economic opportunity.

The first view is largely discredited but this does not mean that we have the magic formula of what inclusive growth would look like or how it might be brought about. Then there is a third view that regardless of growth, and actually in spite of it, there is need for vigorous government action to lift large numbers of people out of extreme poverty.

The budget is a good time to take stock of all these things and to ask whether we see any useful ideas for poverty reduction. But what actually is poverty in a country like Pakistan? There are the usual numbers and debates about them. How many per cent below the poverty line — 9pc or 30pc? Has the ratio gone up or down? How can it have gone down when everyone feels miserable? Is the poverty line appropriate? What is the best way of setting it? Is the data any good — how do we improve it?

Regardless of how we look at the poverty numbers, some things are virtually uncontested. Around half our people do not get an adequate diet and around a third of our families go hungry at times. Around half our children are undernourished — they are physically small compared to a healthy population. And these undernourished children are

far more likely to die young than children who have normal weight and height. Nearly two in five children of primary school age are not in school.

And there is more. The poorest are concentrated in the rural areas of Sindh, southern Punjab, Balochistan and southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They are likely to be wage labourers and it is quite likely that women from poor families work for extremely long hours for extremely low wages to support sectors such as cotton, dairy and wheat which sustain the economy.

The poor are likely to belong to 'low' castes — or groups which are marginalised from mainstream society and politics due to historical disadvantage based on race, occupation, religion or some combination of these. The poorest are likely to face insecure housing conditions, and have unequal access to justice and the rule of law. In urban areas they are most likely to be migrants from these very regions, classes and communities, subsist on daily wages, and be the first to get evicted when there is 'need' for land for decent housing or infrastructure.

How can the instruments of policy reach these people to help improve their lives? Unfortunately, there are no serious answers to this question at the moment. The closest we come to the government's view on poverty reduction is the annual Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. It repeats — without elaboration — the self-satisfied notion that economic growth in Pakistan is pro-poor, that it more than trickles — it gushes down. The report then lists and adds up pro-poor government spending, which mostly comes under the mandate of provincial governments.

In fact, virtually all spending on education, health, law and order and other provincial mandates as well as federal and provincial funding on infrastructure is deemed to be pro-poor. If most of what government already does is pro-poor, according to its own words, what more is there to do? Are governments — federal and provincial — really focusing on the poor when they draw up their spending priorities, the majority of which appear to be skewed towards what they call 'infrastructure projects'?

No amount of infrastructure investment can, by itself, generate enough employment to lift up half the population from the precarious life it leads. But to make sure that people are protected from the most severe forms of vulnerability is not that expensive. At around Rs100 billion, the Benazir Income Support Programme, which is a first and still tentative step in the direction of comprehensive social protection, costs us less than half of what we spend on the annual subsidy to the power sector. The programme does not reduce poverty, but at least it reaches many of the poor, as multiple evaluations have made abundantly clear.

What is needed is something at an even bigger scale, and in many other sectors such as housing, health, education, labour rights and child welfare — not the annual reiteration of what already happens, but something different and real. At the moment, however, there are no ideas on poverty alleviation in the pipeline awaiting implementation. Aside from resources, this poverty of ideas further limits the responsiveness of the state towards the concerns of the poor.

We will know that poverty is a concern in economic policy and budget-making if we could imagine what the federal and provincial government might do for a woman cotton harvester in southern Punjab or Sindh, for her wages and working conditions, for the food security and health of her family, and for her security of housing. Picture this person and then try to imagine what economic policy might have to do with her or him. It is a hard task. Very little trickles that far down, but be aware that down below consists of around half the country.

If we can imagine programmes reaching that woman field worker, and her counterpart in the city, we need to imagine many more such interventions. If we cannot then our imagination is as starved of ideas as our children are of nourishment and learning.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266547>

INTENSITY OF POVERTY

Business Recorder., June 25, 2016

Farhat Ali

Planning Commission of Pakistan, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) jointly released earlier this week, a well-prepared report on the intensity of poverty in Pakistan.

The report underlines that Pakistan's overall Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) has fallen from 55.2 percent to 38.8 percent of the population, whereas the intensity of poverty on account of deprivation of education, health and standard of living is recorded on the higher end of 50.9 percent.

According to the report, Pakistan's 38.8 percent of the population lives in multidimensional poverty with the highest rate of poverty in FATA and Baluchistan followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Punjab.

Poverty has been globally recognised as a major threat to the economic and social stability of the world. It is estimated that in 2012, based on new data, around 900 million people world-wide lived in extreme poverty (12.8 percent of the global population).

The World Bank (WB) has set itself the target of bringing down the number of people living in extreme poverty to 3 percent of the world population by 2030.

The World Bank has revised the global poverty line pegged at US \$1.25 per day to \$1.90 per day. This has been arrived at by taking into consideration the average of national poverty lines of 15 poorest economies of the world. For Pakistan, it means Rs 200 per day.

Also, the new benchmark is Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) which takes into account multiple dimensions of poverty. There are many non-monetary indicators like health, education, sanitation, water and electricity which people experience as multiple dimensions of poverty.

MPI of 2015 counts 1.6 billion people as multi-dimensionally poor, with the largest global share in South Asia and the highest intensity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The South Asia region, notably, comprising of Pakistan, Afghanistan, India Bangladesh and others is home to over 1.688 billion people who constitute 23 percent of world population. It is also home to world's largest population of extreme poor people who are struggling for six decades for a better tomorrow.

Pakistan, with a population of 195 million people, is world's 8th most populous country. The population growth rate is 1.92 percent, meaning an addition of over 3 million people per year. The population is projected to be 227 million by 2025.

The GDP annual growth in Pakistan averaged 4.9 percent from 1952 to 2015 with peaks of 6.8 percent in 1960s, 6.5 percent in the 80s and over 6.5 percent in the first half of 2000s.

It recorded an all time low of -1.8 percent in 1952 and an all time high of 10.2 percent in 1954. Poor state governance at most of the times and lack of government focus on poverty elimination, education, health and employment opportunities did not improve the life of the poor. Some gains made were diluted by a fast population growth.

For Pakistan to move from poverty to prosperity demands a sustainable GDP growth of over 7 percent and a good state governance.

India, with a population of 1.3 billion people, is world's 2nd most populous country with a share of 17.8 percent of world's population. It is second to China which has a population of 1.5 billion and is ranked as number 1.

India has managed to bring down its population growth rate to 1.2 percent from 2.32 percent in the 1980s. Its population is projected to soar to 1.5 billion by 2030. India is home to 26 percent of the global extreme poor which means that the largest number of poor people reside in India.

It is as well a place where the largest number of people escaped poverty on account of rapid and consistent economic growth over the last two decades. Between 1994 and 2012, the share of India's population living in poverty was halved, falling from 45 percent to 22 percent.

Afghanistan's population is 31.3 million of which 36 percent lives in multidimensional poverty. Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is US \$1,885. Literacy rate is 31.7 and the Economic growth is stagnant at 2 percent.

Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries with 162 million people, of whom around 40 percent lives below the poverty line. It is the world's 8th most populous country with a population growth of 1.6 percent per annum. The fight against poverty in South Asia Region is sluggish with some country having done better than the other but not good enough.

The region continues to be one of the poorest regions of the world. The causes of poverty, by and large, are endemic corruption, outdated and incompetent governments, fast population growth, limited employment opportunities, poor education and health facilities, political volatility and border disputes.

Around 450 million people still live under multidimensional poverty in the region. The challenge is to lift them out of poverty in a short period of time to achieve prosperity in this most deprived part of the world.

For countries which have achieved growth in economy and social sector there is a threat of reversals as the structure and dynamics of growth are not robust enough to sustain shocks. This could result in reversal for people who managed to cross over the threshold of poverty and moved over to lower middle class. The issue of poverty is the biggest threat to the security of region.

South Asia Region is perhaps the only left out region where member states have not forged economic cooperation. All others have done it and are deriving economic, political and social benefits out of it – be it the European Union, the Asean states, Gulf states, Central Asian States and others. By sharing resources and creating synergies they have lifted their population out of poverty.

The South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (Saarc) was established in 1980 to forge economic and social integration among the participating countries of the region. It never kicked off to effectively serve the purpose it was established for. The principal cause of failure is mistrust among some member countries.

Bilateral disputes among countries have a clear precedence over the objectives of the association and the mindset of a few of the member countries to work in isolation while competing with each other rather than co-operating with each other. This mindset has not delivered positive results.

Unless the leadership of South Asian States gets rid of this state of mindset driven by the legacy of the past, urge for a regional integration and do away with the irresistible tendency of pulling down the neighbour nation rather than co-operating with it for long-term gains, the poor and unfortunate population of this region will continue to remain poor on account of short-sighted policies of their leaderships. No nation can attain the goal of prosperity while its neighbour is in poverty.

<http://www.brecorder.com/articles-a-letters/187:articles/60052:intensity-of-poverty?date=2016-06-25>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 13TH TO JUNE 19TH 2016

POST-FINANCIAL CRISIS: MACRO-FINANCE LINKAGES MAKE ECONOMIES MORE VULNERABLE

The Express Tribune, June 13th, 2016.

Tehreem Husain

NORTHAMPTON: In an increasingly interconnected world, where portfolio investments and trade flows between countries has reached sizable proportions, risks of financial spillovers is significant.

The source and recipients of the latter is a bit of a pendulum swing. In complete contrast to the global financial crisis of 2007, IMF Global Financial Stability Report of April 2016 tolls the warning bell, 'financial spillovers from emerging markets have risen substantially'. In fact, post-crisis economics has renewed its focus on interconnectedness within an economy through macro-financial linkages.

Observing the ramifications of the global financial crisis, Nobel laureate Paul Krugman said in 2009 that economists would have to do their best to incorporate the realities of finance into macroeconomics. Krugman has not been the first one in saying this. Irving Fisher's 1933 paper 'Debt-deflation Theory of Great Depressions' also highlighted that the business cycle as a 'single', 'self-generating cycle' is a myth and instead coexists with other cyclical and non-cyclical forces.

In modern times the global financial crisis of 2007 again underlined the need to better comprehend the macro-financial linkages of the economy. Like cog wheels in the economy machine, rotations in the financial cog wheel influences real economic activity and vice versa. IMF economist Stijn Claessens popularised the term 'financial cycle' in 2011 and revealed that cycles in credit and house prices are the most synchronised within countries with strong feedback effects as disruptions in one market spillover to others.

This was reiterated in a recent April 2016 National Bureau of Economic Research conference paper by Professor Alan Taylor who undertook a historical perspective of this phenomenon. Taking account of 150 years of data of seventeen advanced economies he revealed a key stylised fact of modern macroeconomic history: credit has exhibited unprecedented growth over the 20th century which graphically could be likened to that of a hockey stick.

More importantly, associated with this 'great leveraging' business cycle moments have become increasingly correlated with financial variables. Credit shocks guaranteed special attention post-financial crisis to better understand the dynamics between macroeconomics and finance in sophisticated Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium models (DSGE).

Higher debt goes hand-in-hand with worse tail events. Excessive leverage exacerbated by weak regulatory standards and asset price bubbles was found to lead to crisis situations. Studies on the US economy have shown that a fall in 1% of capital to assets ratio can lead to a decline of 1.5% of GDP due to its effects on credit availability.

Knowing the current as well as historical importance of macro-finance linkages in the economy, several questions remain to be answered. What should be the design of policy that can prevent future crises? Given the deepening of macro-financial linkages, are crises inevitable and should policy design primarily focus on the mitigation of its harmful consequences?

Financial history has taught us the important lesson that due to increasing interaction between the financial and business cycle, macroeconomic surveillance should pay a careful watch to cycles in financial markets.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1121425/post-financial-crisis-macro-finance-linkages-make-economies-vulnerable/>

RS1BN ALLOCATED FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES OF PSPA

Business Recorder, June 16th, 2016.

Muhammad Saleem

LAHORE: Punjab government has allocated an amount of Rs 1000 million in the budget 2015-16 for the poverty alleviation programmes of Punjab Social Protection Authority.

As per budget document, Punjab government is committed to ensure the welfare of vulnerable groups including women, destitute, senior citizens, children and less privileged people residing in various regions of Punjab.

Targets and major initiatives of the department fixed for 2016-2017 include: establishment of mini Sanatzar at Pasroor (Sialkot) & Taunsa (DG Khan), establishment of beggars home at Faisalabad & Multan, construction of building of shelter homes at Multan, Lodhran, Pakpattan, Kasur, Layyah, Hafizabad, Sheikhpura and Narowal, expansion of survivors of violence against women centres (VAWC) by upgrading the existing Dar-ul-Amans & Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women Crisis Centres in Bahawalpur and Rawalpindi, establishment of 4 Dastkari schools in Lahore and research study/situational analysis of ex-sex workers and their rehabilitation mechanism.

In ADP 2016-17, an amount of Rs 1584 million has been earmarked for social protection sector. The major part of the proposed allocation for the FY 2016-17 will be utilized for establishment of Qasre-Bahboods in various districts of Punjab and establishment of survivors of violence against women centres (VAWC).

During FY 2016-17, the department will implement 19 new schemes. These schemes include construction of buildings of shelter homes etc.

Moreover, Punjab government has increased the allocation for emergency services from Rs 1.9 billion in FY 2015-16 to Rs 2.15 billion in FY 2016-17 which represents a 13-percent increase.

New schemes have been incorporated which aim at expanding the provision of emergency services at tehsil levels and increasing the capacity of existing units.

As per budget document, Rs 152 million have been set aside for the project “Establishment of Urban Search and Rescue Units of Rescue 1122” in the divisions of Faisalabad, Multan and Gujranwala. Further, for expansion of emergency services at tehsil level, Rs 39 million has been allocated for Establishment of Emergency Services in tehsils of Hassanabdul and Jand in district Attock.

Punjab government believes that it is every individual’s basic right to receive timely and quality medical attention in case of an emergency. The need for specialized urban rescue units has long since been felt and it was further intensified by recent incidents involving collapse of large structures and fire breaking out in multi-storey buildings.

Emergency services play an extremely critical role in saving lives of numerous accident victims by providing them timely care.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/06/16/9-page/769512-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 6TH TO JUNE 12TH 2016

‘SINDH BUDGET AIMED AT POVERTY ALLEVIATION’

Dawn, June 11th, 2016

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah has said the government on Saturday will present fourth budget during its present tenure which will be appreciated by the people as it is aimed at poverty alleviation.

He was presiding over a cabinet meeting held here at CM House on Friday to finalise budget proposals and estimates.

Besides all the provincial ministers, advisers and special assistants with the status of provincial ministers, the meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Siddique Memon, Senior Member Board of Revenue Rizwan Memon, Additional Chief Secretary (Dev) Mohammad Waseem, Secretary Finance Sohail Rajput and other officers concerned.

Briefing the cabinet about the proposed budget for next financial year and the recoveries of the Sindh Revenue Board and Excise and Taxation Department, Senior Minister for Finance Syed Murad Ali Shah and Finance Secretary Sohail

Rajput said almost all the recovery targets have been achieved, except the target of the Board of Revenue due to a ban on the allotment of government land.

Additional Chief Secretary (Dev) Mohammad Waseem briefed the cabinet on the next proposed Annual Development Programme (ADP).

On the advice of the chief minister, budget allocation was increased for the departments such as social welfare, special education, sports and youth affairs, minorities and women development which have been working for the welfare of society.

Mr Waseem said there would be 1,777 ongoing and 996 new schemes in the next ADP, but the exact total number of schemes would be announced in the budget speech. He also highlighted new budget proposals of all the government departments.

Under the sustainable development goals, he said priority schemes in the education and health sectors were given substantial budget.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264039/sindh-budget-aimed-at-poverty-alleviation>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 30TH TO JUNE 5TH 2016

SINDH FAILS TO REDUCE SOCIAL LAG, POVERTY

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, May 30th, 2016

Afshan Subohi

THE PPP government in Sindh might have succeeded in containing the sense of alienation in the native population, but has fallen far short of delivering promised better life to its voters.

In critical areas like social/physical services or wider access to economic opportunities, its performance is much below public expectations.

In the second last budget of the provincial government, according to the officials, the focus would be on completion of the ongoing visible development projects and financing of short-term (two year completion time) new projects.

Despite the multiple proposals from tax collectors to widen the tax net to realise service tax potential in the province, the political leadership is not likely to endorse proposals for fear of political blowback.

The upcoming budget, therefore, is expected to be more of the same, a complex jugglery of numbers laced with tall claims and some lame explanations for missed social targets.

The management of Sindh's public finances has improved significantly under the PPP rule. It leads the three other provinces in revenue collection, spends an average 25pc of revenue on development, shuns the practice of pledging resources for new schemes without completing the old ones, but has not been able to stem the slide of social indicators trailing not only behind the national average but even Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The dichotomy is too glaring — recounted in several reports compiled by donors and independent research outfits — to be brushed aside. The policymakers and the provincial bureaucracy did not even pretend to be surprised over the situation.

The reasons for the malice is attributed by politicians to Sindh's peculiar demography, ensuing ethnic and rural/urban divide, deep seated culture of corruption and political polarisation.

Others pin it on the absence of a clear unity of command that they believe suppresses the positive energy and slows down the decision-making.

“When several centres of power operate parallel to each other without a close coordination, the outcome would always be a chaos. Anyone committed to Sindh’s economic and social progress must clear the confusion to instill a drive in the provincial machinery to excel,” an enterprising officer who opted out of the mainstream departments told Dawn a few weeks back. He was hinting contradictory signals coming down from Larkana, Bilawal House and Dubai.

Last week the finance department circulated the Budget Strategy Paper (BSP) for approval by the cabinet. The strategy paper that calls itself ‘a leap forward’ is a three-year rolling plan, prepared with assistance of global development partners.

The strategy also deals with governance reforms to address ‘systemic weakness and missing links in public financial management such as credible budget forecast, policy-based budgeting, transparency in accounting and reporting’.

According to BSP the provincial revenue including federal transfers, provincial-own-tax and other revenue receipts, is expected to shrink by 6.33pc during the current fiscal with a shortfall in revenue assignments and non-tax receipts.

It projects 15pc annual growth in revenue over the next three years, with growth of 16pc in revenue assignment, 10pc in straight transfers, 34pc in federal PSDP and 15pc in provincial tax revenue.

“There is a persistent pressure to collect higher revenue. At the same time there is a serious reluctance to broaden the tax net as it is perceived to be politically risky. To me 15pc greater collection target is unrealistic if the tax net is not widened and PIU (produce index unit) assessment rates for agriculture are not revised upwards. It wouldn’t be fair or effective to squeeze more out of same set of taxpayers,” a senior official in the Sindh Revenue Board commented informally.

The BSP projects that the total expenditure (excluding investments and loan repayments) will shrink by 5.6pc against budget estimates during this fiscal year, development spending down by 19pc and recurring expenditure by less than half percentage point.

Over the next three years, the total spending will grow by 13pc, with development outlay growing by 20pc and the current expenditure by 11pc. This BSP considers ‘a healthy paradigm shift in allocation efficiency with funds flowing towards deficient areas to improve service delivery. The framework paper pins blame on the lack of management capacity and fund releases for delays in project implementation.

It acknowledges that disparities in household incomes and regions within the province are not only pronounced but widening. “As per head count index 2010-11, the incidence of poverty in Sindh was 43.1pc against 39pc national average. The disparities exist across districts in accessing education, /health services, clean drinking water and sanitation. The social indicators in urban Sindh are far better than rural.”

The strategy paper deals with social and economic development including GDP, labour force, agriculture, natural resources and fiscal position, but there is no mention of industry in a province where biggest industrial zones are located. So much for the vision of planners entrusted with daunting challenges.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261517>

GOVT’S NEW POVERTY LINE TO CLASSIFY UP TO 59M AS POOR: PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT  
Dawn, May 31st, 2016

Amin Ahmed



ISLAMABAD: As the country's population is estimated to be around 200 million, the new poverty line set by the government will allow 6.8 to 7.6 million households or 53 to 59 million people to be classified as poor, according to a Planning Commission document.

This demonstrates the government's commitment to reaching low-income households through its policies and interventions, and to improving the lives of all of Pakistan's people, the document says.

The commission says that by resetting the poverty threshold the government is reaffirming its commitment to a sustainable and inclusive development path which is aligned with its policy priorities.

According to poverty rates based on the 2013-14 re-estimation, the new poverty line is Rs3,030.32 per adult equivalent per month, and 29.5 per cent of the population will be considered poor.

Based on the most recent Household Income and Expenditure Survey, conducted in 2013-14, Pakistan's poverty line was equal to Rs2,259.4 per adult equivalent per month. This number translates into Rs2,502.32 per person per month.

The commission mentioned its commitments on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a robust social protection programme, and the creation of more and better jobs for the poor.

According to the commission, most developing countries revisit their poverty threshold when poverty rates get as low as those seen in Pakistan today.

In light of this, the government has made a decision to raise the bar on which it will consider the poor in Pakistan today.

Pakistan has performed exceptionally well in reducing monetary poverty over the past 15 years, down from nearly 35pc of the population in 2001-02 to under 10pc in 2013-14.

The last time a poverty line was set in Pakistan was in 2001-02. The line used the food energy intake method, with a reference group that included the bottom three quintiles of the distribution of expenditure as the reference group.

It also used a caloric threshold of 2,350 calories per adult equivalent per day — higher than the FAO standard used in much of the region.

In Pakistan, the reduction in poverty led to an increase in dietary diversity for everyone. For the poorest, the share of expenses devoted to milk and milk products, chicken, eggs and fish, as well as vegetables and fruits increased.

In contrast the share of cereals, which provide the cheapest calories, declined steadily between 2001-02 and 2013-14.

Since foods like chicken, eggs, vegetables, fruits and milk and milk products are more expensive than cereals and pulses, and have lower caloric content, this shift in consumption increased the amount that people spend per calorie over time.

The commission's document says that many secondary and tertiary cities have sprung up in the rural periphery and, with them, the informal economy has burgeoned. This needs to be better captured in national data, including the GDP, and is likely an important source of the reduction in poverty.

An important indicator is the lack of change in the share of the employed in the rural economy combined with the reduction in male participation in agricultural work.

These issues need to be carefully examined in order to understand both the key determinants of the decline in poverty thus far and the prospects for a continued robust decline in poverty.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261693>

## REDISCOVERING THE POOR

Dawn, June 2nd, 2016

FOR a decade now, the numbers have been misleading us. Poverty has been falling, we've been told, since 2005, and the number of people in Pakistan living below the poverty line has come down from 34.1pc in 2000 to 9.3pc by 2014.

Over this period, the policy conversation on poverty, and measures required for its alleviation, has also shrivelled up; for many years now, the only response that policymakers have when asked about poverty is the Benazir Income Support Programme.

The latter has proved itself sound, passing numerous reviews conducted by the World Bank and the Punjab government, and its role in mitigating the impact of poverty on millions should not be discounted. Nevertheless, it is not sufficient, and at best provides only support and not alleviation.

Creating pathways out of poverty has not been discussed at the policy level, whether in the formulation of the budget or otherwise. In his maiden Economic Survey presentation, the finance minister acknowledged problems in the poverty data, but could only present economic and industrial growth as the vision to lift people out of poverty.

Now we are told that with a small tweak to the poverty line, the number of those living below the line rises to almost one third. The old poverty line was drawn in the year 2001 and was built on food calorific intake as the measure. T

the new line, just adopted and announced this week, takes 'cost of basic needs' as its measure, and shows that more than 29pc of the population lives in poverty. Clearly, the absolute number of those living below the poverty line is a lot higher than what the old data was telling us. But the number has still declined since 2001, when it would have been just above 63pc.

So what should we look at — the long-term decline or the jump due to the change in methodology? The answer is the latter, primarily because no new thinking appears to exist on how to move forward on lessening this figure.

In rupee terms, the old line considered any adult existing on Rs2,502 per month to be living in poverty, while the new one raises this to Rs3,030. That a small addition of only about Rs500 per month should suddenly increase the head count so drastically shows the large number of people clumped around the poverty line.

The prime minister has approved a package for the agriculture economy — where poverty rates are highest — and that includes cheapening the cost of inputs to spur growth. No fresh thinking on how to tackle poverty directly, or to create pathways out of it, appears to be in the works, leaving the poor out of the economy for one more year.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1262096>

## NOT MEETING DEMANDS: 'YOUNG GRADUATES NOT EMPLOYABLE'

The Express Tribune, June 2nd, 2016.

KARACHI: A large number of young people graduating from educational institutions are not employable, Indus Motor Company CEO Parvez Ghias said while addressing the 'Corporate Philanthropy Summit' on Wednesday.

"It is easy to acquire technology, but difficult to find trained human resources," Ghias said while emphasizing the importance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in economic growth.

Organised by the Institute for Advancing Careers and Talents (iACT), the theme of the summit was "Missing in action: corporate support for skill development."

Noting that TVET institutions should design their curricula as per the needs of the industry, Ghias said the involvement of the private sector is imperative for skill development.

As many as 65% of the Pakistani population is categorised as young, but it lacks technical skills. Approximately two million young people enter the job market every year, but only 1.3% of them have vocational training – a statistic that reflects the gap between their skillset and market demand.

Speaking on the occasion, US Consul General Brian Heath said Pakistan's business community cares deeply about the future of the country.

Saying that corporations should promote vocational training, Heath noted only they know best what kind of skills they need in their employees.

According to Habib University President Wasif A Rizvi, low productivity and inadequate skillsets among workers are reflective of a dysfunctional system.

Quoting US-based radical intellectual Noam Chomsky, Rizvi said the presence of unemployed people eagerly looking for jobs despite plenty of available work and resources is indicative of a system that is not working in their favour.

Saad Amanullah, former CEO of Gillette Pakistan, said the government must improve the regulatory environment to promote entrepreneurship and job creation.

He said the private sector can set up a few model TVET institutions, but the government must get its act together and try to address the issue of skill development in right earnest.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1115023/not-meeting-demands-young-graduates-not-employable/>

MEA CULPA

Dawn, June 3rd, 2016

Faisal Bari

SOME reports suggest that more than 150 infants have died in Sindh's Tharparkar district since January of this year alone. However, officials of the government of Sindh's health department have said that 140 is the fatality toll for children under five years since October last year. Either way, does this not come close to the number of children who were martyred in the gruesome attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar?

Most of the reports have been saying that Tharparkar had less than average rainfall last year and the dearth of water, combined with some shortage of food and medicines and other healthcare facilities have been the main cause behind the deaths.

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, in his work on the Great Bengal Famine, has shown that even at that time, a period of drought and severe grain shortages, it was not the scarcity of grain that had caused the famine and led to the death of thousands of people.

It was the intransigence of the colonial government, its lack of care for the locals and the absence of any accountability mechanism that would hold the colonial masters responsible for the welfare of the people of Bengal that had led to the disaster.

There were grain stores in Bengal and in other parts of the country. The colonial administration did not release these stores to ameliorate and address the shortage. The Bengali population did not have the cash or the capital to buy the grain from the open market as the price of grain, given the shortages, had spiked.

It was the lack of purchasing power combined with the colonial government's lack of willingness to address the problem that caused the deaths of thousands and more.

Is the problem any different in Tharparkar? We do not have any water shortages, at least to date, in the rest of the country. We do not have much of a water shortage even in other districts of Sindh.

We do not have food shortages in other parts of the country. We do not really have a shortage of medicines, doctors and other medical personnel in most other parts of the country. Why should a shortage of these things exist in Thar?

Most large cities, be it Karachi, Lahore or Islamabad or Rawalpindi, do not produce enough food for their own consumption. They do not produce enough milk locally either. In some cases, even the underground sources of water under these cities are not enough. In each of these, cases we transport food, milk and water from the rest of the country to these cities.

The population of the cities gives money for not only the food, it also pays the transport cost included in the price of these items. Those who buy these goods are those who are able to afford them.

Why is it hard for the government or private businesses to transport goods and services into Tharparkar if they are available in the rest of the country?

The answer seems very obvious. The child deaths in Tharparkar are a result of governance failure. If there is a water shortage, why is the government of Sindh or the government of Pakistan, not making arrangements to have more water being transported to Tharparkar? If there is a food shortage, it seems easy enough to move food to Tharparkar. The same should be the case with medicines and medical personnel.

It might well be the case that the people of Tharparkar are not able to pay for the cost of the transported commodities. But why should this be seen as a problem? The government of Sindh and the federal government can easily offer a special package to Tharparkar for the duration of the drought.

If we can spend billions on F-16s, corridors, motorways and underpasses, what is the problem in spending a few billions on the poor children of Tharparkar?

Blame games have been played between Sindh government and the federal government as to whose responsibility the children of Thar are. Neither can escape blame irrespective of what the 18th Amendment and other legal provisions might say. If a child dies in Tharparkar, all levels of government are culpable.

But the 150 odd deaths show that the governance system in the country is broken. If it is poor children dying in a backward district, no one cares, and no one is held accountable. Is this any different to what happened in the colonial times?

The citizens of the country can also not escape blame. We have failed to bring more pressure to bear on the provincial and federal governments to address the issue. And if governance systems are not working, we should, as citizens, have organised more of an effort to get help to the children and their families in Tharparkar.

Each one of us is to be blamed. As part of humanity, as part of the citizenry, the people of Tharparkar have rights over us. They have the right to be treated as equal citizens, and they have equal rights to a life of dignity as well. We, each one of us, have denied them these rights. We have not lived up to our obligations.

Most of the families who have been suffering in Tharparkar are poor. Does poverty mean they have no rights? Does it mean that the state, provincial and federal, can ignore them — with impunity? Do the poor have fewer rights?

Do they not deserve a life of dignity? Can the citizens of Pakistan ignore the plight of the people of Tharparkar? As human beings, as moral beings and as citizens of the same country, we should be worrying about what is happening in

Tharparkar and we should be putting pressure on our government to do more, and organising ourselves better, as citizens, to help those in need in Tharparkar.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1262331>

## WORLD BANK URGES PAKISTAN TO INTRODUCE SOFT HOME LOANS FOR THE LESS PRIVILEGED

Dawn, June 5th, 2016

Aamir Shafaat Khan

KARACHI: Pakistan should introduce soft loan schemes aimed at the less privileged strata of society for providing them affordable housing, and take requisite action for building a future plan for the low-income segment, said Loic Chiquier, World Bank's Global Lead on Housing Finance.

Mr Chiquier made these remarks during a meeting of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy Sub-Committee on housing finance organised by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) at Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD) House last week.

From the World Bank, Housing Finance Specialist Olivier Hassler, Program Leader for Pakistan Gabi Afram, Financial Sector Specialist Sarmad Shaikh and Financial Sector Consultant Namoos Zaheer attended the meeting. Representatives from the SBP, House Building Finance Company Limited and Meezan Bank were also present at the event. Various committees consisting of stakeholders agreed to come up with proposals for the common man to avail housing finance at affordable rates.

Chairman ABAD Hanif Gohar said the body was working on building low-cost houses for less privileged people as social responsibility. He, however, stressed: "It is not possible to construct millions of houses single-handedly." He urged the SBP to ask all commercial banks to release more loans for housing, especially for low-cost housing.

Arif Yousuf Jeewa said that no work is done to provide low-cost houses for people from the low-income group on government level.

Muhammad Hassan Bakshi said there was a shortage of more than 8.8 million units in Pakistan which in itself was 'a great challenge as well as a great opportunity'.

It was observed by participants that commercial banks are reluctant to give loans to people from informal income groups due to lack of proper documentation.

EVER GROWING SLUMS: Meanwhile, Patron-in-chief ABAD Mohsin Sheikhani said about 38 per cent of the over 200 million population of Pakistan lives in slums. Population in big cities is growing due to the influx of people from rural areas which are devoid of basic amenities.

Problems in cities are increasing due to huge arrival of people resulting in mushroom growth of slum areas, he added.

Sindh has over 1,400 Kactchi Abadis while Karachi alone is home to over 500 of these slums.

"Almost 10m people are living in the slums of Karachi out of over 20m people. It means half of the population of Karachi has no permanent address," he said.

No record of people living slums is available with local bodies or law enforcement agencies. Lack of record creates a number of social problems, with law and order being a major issue.

"It is hard to find as to who is living in slums and how they ended up there. This information is not even there with the security agencies," he said.

Many people having criminal records in other parts the country are also coming to settle in slums of Karachi to hide their identities, he added. “The government should not regularise slums or Katchi Abadis as they are but rather should regulate these according to law so that they can be converted into regular societies,” Mohsin said.

ABAD is ready to build ‘free of cost’ apartments on modern lines for slum dwellers and turning the areas into gated communities with schools, hospitals and other civic facilities for the residents.

He said the association has conceived the idea where in cottage industries would be established within the area so that people living there could earn livelihood respectfully. This will help curtail the crime rates too, he hoped.

He said ABAD has given a formula to the government for the development of slums. Builders would build houses and other civic facilities on half of the slum land besides developing commercial residential projects on other half of the land.

He added 99pc of the benefits would go to people while the government would be able to establish its writ through census.

IGP Sindh has recently accepted that slums are major sources of law and order in Karachi, he claimed and went to add: “ABAD wants to take up this project as a social responsibility and not for profit only. Sindh Minister for Katchi Abadis Jam Khan Shoro has endorsed ABAD’s proposal.”

NO LEGISLATION IN CDA, KP: Sources privy to the third meeting of Expert Working Group (EWG) on formation of national policy/legislation on rehabilitation of katchi abadis and affordable housing for low income groups said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhawa have not made any legislation on katchi abadis and low income housing. On the other hand, Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab are making some progress on the issue.

The EWG meeting was held in the first week of April in Karachi. Members of the KP and Punjab government as well as the CDA remained absent in the meeting.

In an order passed on February 11, 2016, the Supreme Court of Pakistan the federal and provincial governments to prepare draft bills for provision of inexpensive, low cost housing and social housing for inhabitants of slums areas and shelter less people.

The Supreme Court further directed that an appropriate commission be appointed and the present EWG be given the task to conduct the process and complete the same positively within a period of two months with concrete suggestions and recommendations to all the concerned authorities. In this regard two meetings of EWG had already been held in Lahore and Quetta.

The third meeting, held in Karachi, was informed that the Balochistan government has prepared a draft law “The Balochistan Katchi Abadis (Regularization and Development) Act 2016” covering the aspects of low income housing besides addressing the issue of katchi abadis in the province.

The representative of Balochistan government informed the meeting about the action plan for the rehabilitation of katchi abadis. The representative added that fresh data has to be collected throughout the province and district headquarters.

In contrast, representatives from Sindh government said the province has number of specific laws to deal with the issue including the Sindh Katchi Abadis Act 1987, Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority Regulation 1993 (Amendment 2013) and Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority Low Cost Housing Regulation 2008.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1262331>

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# July 2016

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 25TH TO JULY 31ST 2016*

*MALNUTRITION, LACK OF MEDICAL CARE CONTINUE TO CLAIM LIVES IN THAR*

Dawn, July 27th, 2016

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Amid widespread complaints of a lack of essential medicines and proper treatment facilities at government-run hospitals and healthcare units in Tharparkar district, there has been no let up in the death of newborns and small children being reported every day from different parts of the district.

Tharparkar has been facing an acute shortage of food, water and essential goods for years although the provincial government has taken several initiatives to mitigate the sufferings of Thari people.

On Tuesday, the death of five infants was reported from the Mithi Civil Hospital alone, leading the toll — mostly attributed to malnutrition in expectant mothers and unavailability of proper medical treatment to them and their babies — to 445 since January 1.

Official sources, however, put the number at 281, acknowledging that over 240 of them were reported dead at the Mithi Civil Hospital alone.

Those who died on Tuesday were identified as Mohammed Awais, Shafiat, Chetan Bheel, Partab and a newborn belonging to Mr Lutifullah.

The Pakistan Army has set up relief camps with medical treatment facilities in the worst-hit areas of the district under the 'Operation Labbaik-2'.

A relief camp was set up on Tuesday by the Hyderabad Garrison in Biryra village of Dali taluka, according to an ISPR release. Around 10 tonnes of food and relief goods were distributed among drought-affected families, it said, adding that a large number of patients were provided medical care and medicines free of cost.

The healthcare was being provided at the medical camp where the army's male and female doctors, nurses and other paramedical personnel were available, it said.

According to the ISPR release, the army has distributed 3,883 tonnes of ration among 193,068 families and provided medical treatment to over 131,247 patients during the operation over the last two years.

Meanwhile, health facilities run by the provincial government in the district continued to refer a large number of Thari patients to various hospitals in Karachi and Hyderabad.

It was estimated that around 440 children had already been referred to major hospitals in the two cities due to unavailability of proper treatment within the district.

However, non-governmental organisations and other private stakeholders claim that more than 80 per cent of the referred patients would die before reaching their destination.

Their concern is based on a large number of complaints made to them by the bereaved families and relatives of the referred patients.

On Tuesday, a big group of enraged Thari people held a demonstration at the gate of the Mithi Civil Hospital to register their protest against alleged manhandling of a woman, Khatoon Bheel, by a paramedic.

The woman had complained about “callous attitude” of dispenser Hero Maharaj upon her insistence on due attention to her problem.

Enraged over the dispenser’s alleged manhandling of the woman, a number of people gathered outside the hospital, raised slogans against him and the hospital administration.

They also brought old tyres and burned them at different places opposite the hospital demanding action against the paramedic. They told the media that people, especially women, were often maltreated at the hospital by the staff.

The protesters dispersed only after civil surgeon Dr Iqbal Ahmed Bhurgari came out and announced suspension of Mr Maharaj and promised action against other errant staff.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1273385/malnutrition-lack-of-medical-care-continue-to-claim-lives-in-thar>

TO FIGHT TERROR, OTHER ILLS: ASIAN ASSEMBLY SEEKS TO WAGE ANTI-POVERTY FIGHT  
The Express Tribune, July 28th, 2016.

Maryam Usman

ISLAMABAD: Poverty alleviation is vital to combat international terrorism, drug abuse and trafficking, arms smuggling, sea piracy and transnational crimes.

This was stressed in a resolution adopted by members of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) on Wednesday at the concluding day of a meeting of its standing committee on economic and sustainable development affairs.

In the APA meeting delegations participated from Bhutan, Turkey, Iran, Thailand, Kuwait, Bahrain, the Maldives, Indonesia, Russia, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Jordan, Sri Lanka and Lebanon.

The APA, an offshoot of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAPP), is formed by a group of Asian parliamentarians to join forces toward promoting peace and human rights in Asia.

A proposed amendment of Iranian delegation on poverty eradication called for increase in efficiency of working women and removal of discrimination in the wages of men and women.

The amendment further laid stress on empowering the poor to improve their living conditions; enabling them to participate in decision-making on issues which affect their lives; helping working women to increase their efficiency and removing discrimination in the wages of men and women.

“We acknowledge that poverty continues to be the biggest challenge of our time,” said Tjatur Sapto Edy, member of the House Commission VII that oversees energy, natural mineral resources, research and technology and environment in Indonesia.

Edy suggested that efforts to eradicate poverty should be holistic and integrated into the national strategy, calling for local and global participation.

The Indonesian delegation proposed calling on the APA member countries to work together towards sustainable peace and security in the region by addressing the root causes of violence and building resilient institutions and peaceful societies as enabling factors for economic growth and development.



They asked member countries to review their governments' budget allocation, procurement and policy implementation.

They called on the APA countries to direct more resources and provide incentives towards clean energy projects to generate power from renewable energy resources.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1150836/fight-terror-ills-asian-assembly-seeks-wage-anti-poverty-fight/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 18TH TO JULY 24TH 2016

MEASURE OF IMPOVERISHMENT: KARACHI THIRD LEAST POOR DISTRICT

The Express Tribune, July 19th, 2016.

Irfan Ghauri

ISLAMABAD: Karachi stands at number three among all the districts of the country in terms of having the least poverty. The metropolis, with an approximate population of 20 million, has a poverty ratio of 4.5% on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

MPI is based on the Alkire Foster methodology that covers three dimensions – education, health and living standards — as a yardstick to measure poverty instead of the traditional methods of relying on income or consumption as a base.

Compiled with the help of Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the report was recently released by the Planning Commission of Pakistan.

Only half a dozen districts in the country could make their place category where poverty ratio is within single digit.

A comparison with the data of the past few years gives an interesting overall and district-wise picture of economic and social conditions of people living in different parts of the country.

Islamabad is the only city where the poverty ratio has remained within single digits. It was measured at 3.1% in 2014-15, 5.8% in 2012-13, 9.6% in 2010-11 and 9.1% in 2008-09.

In Karachi, the poverty ratio was 4.5% in 2014-15, 6.7% in 2012-13, 9.9% in 2010-11 and 10.5% in 2008-09.

For Lahore it was measured at 4.3% in 2014-15, 6.8% in 2012-13, 11.1% in 2010-11 and 10.3% in 2008-09.

Rawalpindi falls fourth in terms of having the least number of poor people in the country. In the district, 7.5% people fall below the poverty line. They were 7% in 2012-13, 11% in 2010-11 and 11.6% in 2008-09 under the MPI.

Jhelum and Attock are also listed among the cities where the poverty ratio was less than 10% -for Jhelum it was 8.5% and 9.9% in Attock.

In Peshawar, 31.5% people live in poverty. The figure was 20.9% in 2012-13, 33.2% in 2010-11 and 44.1% in 2008-09.

In contrast, there are several districts where over 90% of the population lives below the poverty line. Quetta is the most affluent district of Balochistan where 46.3% of people live under the poverty line.

The poorest districts are Qila Abdullah at 97%, Harnai at 94.2%, Barkhan at 93.6%, Sherani 90.6%, Ziarat at 90%, Kohlu at 86.8%, Dera Bugti at 88.4% and Chagai at 89.2%.

The most alarming indicator of the report is the intensity of poverty, as each poor person lacks access to half of the indicators selected for measuring poverty. The MPI findings show 60.6% population of the country does not have

access to cooking fuel, 48.5% do not complete schooling, almost four out of every 10 people (39%) do not have any assets and over 38% live in a one-room shelter. Moreover, about one-third of the population does not have access to health facilities in the country.

To tailor Pakistan's context, 15 indicators were used for the national measure, instead of the 10 employed for such measures globally.

Within these 15 indicators, eight were used in the 'living standards category', which included access to water, sanitation, walls, overcrowding, electricity, cooking fuel, assets, and land. The livestock indicator was specific for rural areas only.

Three indicators included under the dimension of education were education quality, years of schooling and child school attendance.

In the health dimension, access to health facilities/basic health units, immunisation, ante-natal care and assisted delivery were used as the indicators.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1144434/measure-impoverishment-karachi-third-least-poor-district/>

## THE PREVALENCE OF MALNUTRITION

Business Recorder, July 21 2016

Despite witnessing economic and technological progress, Pakistan is still battling with the challenge of malnutrition. It is unfortunate that in the past forty years, the essential nutrition in Pakistan has worsened rather than improve. Any comparison with other south Asian countries would show that Pakistan is at the bottom of the list when it comes to nutrition. Over the years, multiple reports have highlighted the fact that the country is struggling with the problem of under nutrition, and it has become one of the significant silent crises the nation is facing.

On Thursday, the Planning Commission (PC) of Pakistan and the World Food Programme (WFP) presented a report that once again brought this issue out in the open. The report has warned that the situation is quickly moving for worse. As per the report, two out of every three Pakistani households cannot afford to eat a proper diet that has the right amount of nutrients like vitamins, minerals and other micronutrients.

Unfortunately, the findings noted that in Balochistan, 83.4 percent households are suffering from lack of nutrients. However, the figures for Balochistan should not come as a surprise to anyone. For years, various studies have warned about the under nutrition in the province. Sindh is not far behind with 70.8 percent, while in KP and Punjab 67.4 and 65.6 percent households are suffering from malnutrition, respectively. The families in Islamabad are the exceptions as 68.5 percent can afford a balanced diet, while still, 31.5 percent are not able to pay for the recommended diet according to the recent study by PC and WFP.

There are several reasons behind this situation in Pakistan. Firstly, most people don't have the ability to afford nutritious food; they lack of availability or accessibility of food as well as their personal diet preferences.

WFP argues that despite the fact that the food production is enough, food insecurity exists because not everyone has access to it. Even though the quality of diet of both urban and rural Pakistanis are below par, the state of the countryside is in much worse shape than cities. The rural areas are the most affected because most of the communities in villages are unable to afford a proper meal. Having said that, however, Pakistan also performs poorly when compared to urban areas in other Asian and African countries.

Over the years, a host of countries including Egypt, Ethiopia, Nepal and nearly all of the Indian states have made major gains in tackling malnutrition. All these countries have become successful because they made a political commitment to take actions to improve nutrition. Once a political commitment is in place, it is easy to commit

investments in high-impact, cost-effective nutrition interventions and policies in a broad range of economic and social sectors expected to contribute to nutrition advancement.

Dr Tausif Akhtar Janjua, former country director of Micronutrient Initiative (MI), put forward a case of fortification of wheat flour with iron and folic acid. MI has already run this project with successful results in various districts of Azad Kashmir. He further added that all over the world, the evidence base and the science for improving nutrition outcomes – by direct interventions – are well established. ‘Fortification of food, by and large, is the single most effective intervention to combat malnutrition’.

Despite a popular narrative that no one sleeps on an empty stomach in Pakistan, far too many people are sleeping hungry, even when according to the Planning Commission and WFP there is apparently enough to eat. Pakistan has to deal with this on an emergency basis. There is a need for out-of-the-box thinking on this matter. Perhaps, the time has come for Pakistan to look towards its neighbours like Bangladesh and learn from their success. But, one thing is clear; the issue certainly needs an open-minded thinking that should be beyond politics.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/07/21/2-page/778139-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 11TH TO JULY 17TH 2016

GAP BETWEEN POOR AND RICH GETTING WIDER

The Express Tribune, July 11th, 2016.

Tehreem Husain

NORTHAMPTON: Consider the following fact; average income of the top 0.1% of US households in 2014 was \$6.1 million, compared to average income of the bottom 90% of households being about \$33,000 — almost 184 times less than the top 0.1%. Income disparities have become pronounced not only in America but worldwide including Asia. Being the powerhouse of growth in the global economy and being home to more than half of the world’s population, it is imperative to analyse whether the ‘growth with equity’ miracle has worked in Asia.

The recently-released Regional Economic Outlook for the Asia and Pacific has projected growth in Asia-Pacific economies to slightly decelerate to 5.25% in 2016-17. The report finds that until about 1990, Asia grew strongly and secured large gains in poverty reduction while simultaneously achieving a fairly equitable society. However, this has been broken down and in many large Asian emerging markets there has been a significant increase in income inequality.

Economic literature has found inequality to be harmful for the pace and sustainability of growth. High levels of inequality can lead to sub-optimal levels of investment in basic human rights such as education and health. Increase in inequality also leads to less inclusive and pro-poor growth. Recent studies have found inequality both in terms of income and opportunities rising in Asia, which has led governments to explicitly deal and practice a more sustainable and balanced growth model. This has been clearly stated in China’s Thirteenth Five Year plan (2016-20) and India’s Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17).

The Gini coefficient is a measure of statistical dispersion which exhibits the dispersion in the income of a country’s residents and is one of the most commonly used measures of inequality. The level of the Gini coefficient is now higher in Asia than the rest of the world. The average gini coefficient rose from 36 in 1990 to about 40 in 2013 in Asia, relative to a rise of less than 2 points for the rest of the world during the same period.

Amongst the emerging market economies, inequality has been persistent and rising in India and China. Much of this increase is explained by spatial disparities especially that between urban and rural areas. According to the report, higher inequality has also lowered the effectiveness of growth to combat poverty and prevented the building of a substantial middle class.

According to the Poverty and Inequality Statistics published by the World Bank, the Gini coefficient for Pakistan has fallen. Spatial inequalities, however, plague Pakistan too and a recent report by the UN titled 'Multidimensional Poverty in Pakistan' for 2014-15, states that although poverty in urban areas of Sindh stands at 10.6% an alarming 75.5% of rural areas in the province are mired by poverty.

Similarly, although Punjab has accounted for the highest reduction in poverty but districts in southern Punjab remain starkly poor.

The divide between urban and rural areas also creates inequality of opportunities with the poor in rural areas having little access to education, health and financial services. This sows the seeds for wider inequality in the future.

Access to spending on development projects, education and capital expenditure have been found to be some of the crucial drivers of inequality in Asia as they have disproportionately benefited those who are at the higher end of the income distribution. Policies should be designed to focus on three main areas to fight inequality.

Firstly, expanding and broadening the coverage of social spending, to achieve efficiency and equity.

Secondly, there also needs to be a concerted effort to enhance the coverage of financial services to the bottom 40% of the population. Lastly, legal protection for regular and non-regular workers should be prioritised so as to provide job security and flexibility.

These policies have proved to have beneficial impacts in other South Asian countries such as Thailand, Philippines and Malaysia.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1138939/disparity-gap-poor-rich-getting-wider/>

'TWO OUT OF EVERY THREE HOUSEHOLDS CANNOT AFFORD PROPER DIET'

Dawn, July 15th, 2016

Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: Two of every three households cannot afford the recommended nutritious diet, according to a report launched by the Planning Commission and the World Food Programme (WFP) on Thursday.

The report, 'Minimum cost of diet in Pakistan' showed that the food expenditure of 67.6pc of the households in Pakistan was below the staple, adjusted nutritious diet threshold.

It added that 4.7pc of the household in the country were living below the energy-only calorie poverty line set at 2,350 kcal per person per day.

Speaking at the launch, chief of nutrition at the planning ministry, Mohammad Aslam Shaheen, said the poor quality of diet was due to a combination of factors, including not being able to afford nutritious food, universal food preferences and feeding behaviours.

The issue of malnutrition cannot be addressed by one ministry, partner or donor, he said, adding it would require a combined effort from all stakeholders.

The report included a message from Mr Shaheen, which reads: "The casual factors to malnutrition in Pakistan are numerous and varied, however, the major underlying factors include both limitations in household access and affordability of nutritious food and the food habits and preference, which shape food purchasing and preparation practices."

According to the report, 83.4pc of the households in Balochistan 70.8pc in Sindh, 67.4 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 65.6 in Punjab cannot afford the proper, recommended nutrition. Only a majority of households in Islamabad were able to afford proper nutrition with 31.5pc still not able to pay for the recommended diet.

The 48-page report said non-affordability was higher in rural areas compared to the cities.

The minimum cost of the recommended food is based on the availability and affordability of the foods and not on food preferences.

“People make choices for food based on different reasons, not just health or nutrition. Therefore, the choice will not be as optimised for nutrition as the choices made by linear programming and hence, in reality, costs for meeting nutrient intake recommendations are likely to be higher than what has been calculated.”

After studying household expenditure patterns, the report indicated that tea consumption increased the total expenditure set for each household for nutritious foods.

WFP country director and representative Lola Castro said the findings of the report could be used for advocacy, strategy development and programme design and implementation for better addressing nutrition needs in Pakistan.

“The findings of the cost of the diet study are vital component to understand what causes malnutrition in Pakistan and will be instrumental to advocate for appropriate nutrition interventions,” she said in her message in the report.

Sharing the findings of another study, the organisers said the quality of children’s diet was poor for urban and rural children and that the health of rural children is also poorer.

The urban population is wealthier and can better afford nutritious food but children’s diet in Pakistan is poorer than that of neighbouring and African countries, they said.

The other study showed that more than 2.5 million children in the urban areas of Pakistan had stunted growth, which is more than all children with the same condition in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea.

It also said more than one million children were underweight for their height in the urban parts of the country, which is more than all the children of Iraq, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Afghanistan, Sudan, DR Congo, and Ethiopia.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1270924/two-out-of-every-three-households-cannot-afford-proper-diet>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 3RD TO JULY 10TH 2016

POVERTY AFFLICTS 75% PEOPLE IN RURAL SINDH

The Express Tribune, July 3rd, 2016.

Irfan Ghauri

ISLAMABAD: Recent floods, coupled with egregious governance, have worsened living standards in Sindh where 75% of the population in rural areas is now living in abject poverty.

The overall poverty ratio of 43.1%, compiled by aggregating figures from urban and rural areas, does not actually convey the real picture of Sindh most of which is rural.

The province has been categorised second poorest after Balochistan among all the provinces and regions of Pakistan, excluding the militancy-hit Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Balochistan’s 84.6% rural population lives below the poverty line, according to a United Nations report.

The statistics revealed in the recently released study on multidimensional poverty in Pakistan were discussed at length at a seminar organised by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and International Labour Organisation.

The UN report for 2014-15 titled "Multidimensional Poverty in Pakistan" shows poverty in urban areas of Sindh at 10.6% but an alarming 75.5% in rural areas, which constitute a major chunk of the province.

The figures have been calculated with a new methodology. They cover education, health and standard of living as indicators for measuring poverty. Traditionally consumption or income level was taken as base to the count.

In Sindh's Umarkot district, where half of the population is Hindu, 84.7% people lived under the poverty line. In 2012-13, the figure stood at 80.7% and in 2010-11 75.9%. In Thatta, 78.5% people live in poverty while the rate was 76.5% in 2012-13.

Few districts in Sindh have seen progress in alleviating miseries of people. Some showed a slight improvement one year but the situation deteriorated the next year. A slight change in weather or an untoward incident pushes the people back to extreme poverty.

In Tharparkar, some progress was achieved over the years but the district slipped back into the negative trend. In 2008-9, 92.1% lived in poverty, 91.6% in 2010-11 and 84.6% in 2012-13. But in 2014-15, the figure increased to 87%.

Statistics for Nawabshah, Naushero Feroz and Mirpurkhas also show similar trends. However Jamshoro is among a few districts witnessing a steady improvement over the years.

In 2008-09, 72.4% population of the district was living below the poverty line but it reduced to 70.7% in 2010-11 and 67% in 2012-13. In 2014-15, the district registered a poverty rate of 55.6% – faring better than the provincial average.

With better job and business opportunities, Karachi maintained its reputation as the 'mother of the poor'. Poverty in Sindh's capital stood at 4.5% in 2014-15, decreasing the poverty ratio for the province as a whole. In, 10.5% of Karachi's population lived below the poverty line.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1135227/alarming-stats-poverty-afflicts-75-people-rural-sindh/>

## TOLL RISES TO 390 AS SIX MORE CHILDREN DIE IN THAR

Dawn, July 4th, 2016

**MITHI:** Six more children died at the Mithi Civil Hospital on Sunday because of malnutrition and related diseases, raising the death toll to 390 this year since Jan 1, according to unofficial reports.

The babies of Lakho, Sarang Bheel, Jamal Bheel, Zafarullah, five-month-old Sharpal and six-month-old Mehji breathed their last the hospital.

Health officials disputed the figure of 390 deaths this year and said the death toll so far had been 249 over the past six months.

They said that over 54,780 children were treated at six healthcare facilities of the district and were uncertain about the fate of the 417 kids who were referred to Hyderabad and Karachi hospitals from Mithi civil hospital for better treatment. The health officials said they did not know whether the ailing children died or survived on their way to hospitals.

Meanwhile, Tharparkar Deputy Commissioner Dr Shahzad Thaheem said that the 10th phase of wheat distribution in poor Tharis started on Sunday on the directives of the Sindh government.

He said that the rain had soaked around 20 per cent area of the desert so far but the jubilant the peasants had already started preparing land for the cultivation of traditional crops.

Dr Thaheem hoped the arid zone would get widespread rainfall in coming few days, which would bring an end to the long dry spell in Thar.

He said that he had directed staffers of livestock department to vaccinate all cattle returning to Thar along with their owners after recent showers. Serious efforts would be made to give maximum facilities to people of Thar, he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268854/toll-rises-to-390-as-six-more-children-die-in-thar>

## UNIONS OF THE POOR

Dawn, July 6th, 2016

Syeda Shehribano Kazim

ONE of the greatest outcomes for development economic policy is, or should be, the reduction in poverty and unemployment, both in the rural and urban areas. Recent reports show that poverty in Pakistan, based on cost of basic needs, has come down from around 64.2pc in 2001-02 to 29.5pc in 2014. Based on food energy intake, poverty during this period has declined from 34.6pc to 9.31pc.

Similarly, unemployment has also dropped from 6.2pc in 2012-13 to 5.9pc in 2014-15. This year the government will allocate Rs22.4 billion for vertical health programmes and continue to implement the Prime Minister's National Health Insurance Programme. Meanwhile, the provinces have announced their own development budgets.

Nevertheless, that is only one side of the story. With a Human Development Index value of 0.538, Pakistan ranks 147th out of 188 countries and territories. In terms of the Gender Inequality Index it ranks 121st out of 155 countries: only 19.3pc women complete secondary education compared to 46.1pc men, while female participation in the labour market is 24.6pc compared to 82.9pc for men.

Another dimension of the socioeconomic situation is that rural poverty has declined less than urban poverty while more than two-thirds of Pakistanis live in rural areas. Of these, more than two-thirds are employed in agriculture, accounting for about half of the employed labour force.

Agriculture thus constitutes the largest sector of our economy with the majority of the population — directly or indirectly — dependent on this sector, which contributes about 24pc to the GDP and is the largest source of foreign exchange earnings.

Recent trends in agricultural incomes have been less than encouraging due to a resurgence in rural poverty. While droughts, floods, changing rain patterns and the vagaries of nature have played a role in hobbling rural economies and bringing down agricultural incomes, vulnerability to disaster is another dimension of poverty. The issues that face Pakistan's rural population are varied.

They include poorly functioning factor markets and constrained access to assets, inequality of land and resource ownership, diminishing water resources and poor management of existing water supply, and constraints to agricultural productivity — which include knowledge or information gaps, amongst other factors.

Equitable development, provision of adequate and appropriate social services to the rural sector and the structural shift from raw material agricultural production to value addition requires cohesive economic, social and human development. Considering the sheer size of the population — roughly 140 million of which is in the rural areas, no top-down approach will yield results.

Other than infrastructural gains, a benevolent government cannot bring development to poor households in the rural sector. Investments in infrastructure are integral to the process of development but the infrastructure — roads, electrification, telecommunication and irrigation — is only the most basic hardware.

The problems that the rural poor face are those of illiteracy, lack of awareness of options and opportunities, health and sanitation — in short, the problems of the software.

The development of human resources is vital to the uplift of rural society. This means enabling the rural populace to decide on the course of development they want to adopt for their households and communities, building their capacities and abilities, and developing linkages that allow them to access the funds, resources and support they need, when they need it.

Unions of the poor — institutions of the poor through social mobilisation — much like trade unions, create cohesive participatory and representative social groups in communities that are able to speak for, work with and belong to the rural poor. Instead of an alien development agenda brought from an ‘authority’, the changes that such a union brings are organic and sustainable. It also ensures that the so-called improvements do not sever the social and cultural bonds of the rural communities, which differ widely across provinces and linguistic belts.

What is required is the redirection of priorities by mobilising institutional and human resources towards political, economic and civic dimensions. While the government should provide social, legal and economic safety nets, the real focus should be on empowering the people who should organise, plan and execute the programmes at the household and community level.

According to the Rural Support Programme Network outreach data, rural support programmes have a presence in 3,710 union councils in Pakistan, and the methodology they use is to economically empower households through social mobilisation and by organising the poor. This approach is an effective way to reach rural poor households without which poverty cannot be eliminated.

Luckily, pockets of Pakistan have experience of social mobilisation, with over six million households organised into 379,285 community organisations. This experience needs to be scaled up nationally to create unions of the poor that are able to chart their own course to development.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1269319/unions-of-the-poor>

#### SHUT DOWN: BISP CLOSES THREE KEY ‘PRO-POOR’ SCHEMES

The Express Tribune, July 6th, 2016.

Qadeer Tanoli

ISLAMABAD: The PML-N government has closed three important projects aimed at skill development of unschooled manpower of the country that the last PPP regime had initiated under its flagship Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

Waseela-i-Rozgar, Waseela-i-Haq and Waseela-e-Sehat launched under the BISP by the PPP government with fanfare, “have been closed due to operational and management issues”.

The BISP board in its report said these programmes were initiated without proper working. “Weak in design, the initiatives lacked proper monitoring and they overlapped with other federal and provincial schemes,” the board said.

Interestingly, no action has been taken against those who had formulated these schemes or executed them. Merely closing the programmes without any accountability of those who had been involved in running these schemes for years also leaves a big question mark on the current government’s claim that it closed them on account of transparency issues.



The PPP on the other hand has decided to take up this and some other issues in the National Assembly after Eidul Fitr which, according to it, was affecting 'pro-poor' schemes.

While talking to The Express Tribune, PPP's central leader Noor Alam Khan strongly criticised this move of the PML-N government and said this government has made it a tradition either to close schemes meant to benefit poor people or slashes down their budget drastically.

"This is quite unfortunate that the PML-N government is against the schemes which were initiated for poorest of the poor. Not only these schemes but other projects which were meant for poor people were either closed down or their budget was cut down by the present regime which reflects its mind-set."

"Opposition Leader Khurshid Shah will talk and lodge protest in the next session of the National Assembly after Eid over the government's action," he maintained.

Khan said it is beyond imagination how a project or a scheme may be overlapping in the present computerised environment. He said if there were errors then they should have been addressed instead of closing them down, and this move of the government will affect poor citizens badly.

At present some 5.2 million beneficiaries of the BISP are getting Rs4,700 on a quarterly basis and closing down these schemes mean these beneficiaries would be affected either way.

Although these schemes have been shut down, they continue to appear on the BISP website, reflecting the state of inefficiency of the organisation.

Under the Waseela-e-Rozgar scheme, the BISP was supposed to give vocational training to its beneficiaries in around 80 trades — including courses of auto electrician, beautician, auto mechanic, computer operator, X-Ray technician, welding, sanitary fitter, tractor mechanic among others.

Waseela-e-Haq's main objective was to provide and enhance small business and entrepreneurship among the underprivileged.

Under the Waseela-e-Sehat scheme, the BISP had launched Group Life Insurance Scheme for BISP beneficiaries to cover breadwinner of a family. Dependents of the deceased were compensated for Rs100,000 in case of natural or accidental death of the breadwinner.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1137223/shut-bisp-closes-three-key-pro-poor-schemes/>

## COUNTRY MEETS IMF INDICATIVE TARGET ON BISP

Business Recorder, July 09, 2016

Pakistan has met International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicative target on Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), as the coverage of the unconditional cash transfer programme for the poorest households has been extended and remains on track to reach 5.3 million beneficiaries by end-June 2016.

The Staff Report prepared by IMF for its Executive Board consideration on June 27 after the conclusion of discussions on 11th review of Extended Fund Facility (EFF) in Dubai from May 02-11, commended continued progress in protecting the most vulnerable through BISP.

The Fund contends that the ceiling will be adjusted downward for any shortfall in the targeted cash transfers (BISP) and it will be adjusted upward for over performance in the BISP up to Rs 12 billion in fiscal year 2014-15, and Rs 6 billion in fiscal year 2015-16 from their indicative targets.

Stipends were increased by 41/2 percent during fiscal year 2015-16 to protect beneficiaries' purchasing power and will be further increased by a similar amount next year, with financial support from development partners, the report states adding that the coverage of education conditional cash transfers is also expanding. "Under the ongoing EFF-supported programme, cash transfers were increased by more than 50 percent and the programme coverage was broadened from 4.2 million beneficiaries at end-June 2013 to 5.28 million at end-March 2016, with the aim of reaching 5.3 million beneficiaries by end-June 2016," it added.

The government is pursuing the extension of the BISP coverage to include the remaining eligible households from the BISP beneficiary list. In addition, the government is improving the quality of BISP services by rolling out a new biometric system to all BISP beneficiaries by September 2016 and by adopting improved banking contracts by October 2016.

Furthermore, the authorities are committed to further strengthening the targeting and the efficiency of BISP by updating its beneficiary database. To this end, the scorecard methodology was updated and a new questionnaire developed. Moreover, a new pilot door-to door survey and, in parallel, self-registration in selected districts, are being launched. The full survey at the national level will likely be completed by December 2017.

Meanwhile, to achieve the beneficiary centric payment model, the government has apprised the IMF that it is revisiting the existing model, in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), and will initiate the procurement process to identify the partner banks for the new contracts by July 2016 and put in place the new contracts by October 2016.

<http://www.brecorder.com/money-a-banking/198:pakistan/63546:country-meets-imf-indicative-target-on-bisp/?date=2016-07-09>

## 10 NEWBORNS DIE AT MITHI, ISLAMKOT HOSPITALS

Dawn, July 10th, 2016

MITHI: Death of newborns generally attributed to malnutrition in expectant mothers and a lack of proper medicines and treatment facilities in the desert region of Tharparkar continued to rise this month as nine more newborns were reported to have died over the last 24 hours at Mithi and Islamkot hospitals alone.

Official figures put the number of such deaths at 263 since January 1 but independent sources claimed on Saturday that the toll had crossed the mark of 400. Various NGOs working in the food, nutrition and health sectors within the region said that they registered 404th death till date this year. The figure was based on parents' reporting of the death of their newborns at hospitals, clinics and houses, they said, arguing that the official figure was based on deaths at government healthcare facilities.

Mohammad Ismail, Bharoo Bheel, Jhaman Bheel, Harsinsh Bheel, Gagan Bheel, Tarpal Singh, Balchand Meghwar, Abdul Rasheed, Vastav and Wali Dad Khokhar have reported the death of their respective newborns on Friday evening and Saturday at Mithi and Islamkot hospitals.

Dr Chaman Rathi, a senior medical officer at the Mithi Civil Hospital, told Dawn on Saturday that a total of 211 children, including newborns, died during treatment at the healthcare facility since January 1. Most of these children were underweight, he said. The bereaved fathers complained of a lack of essential treatment facilities at the two hospitals and held the provincial government responsible for it.

The common concern expressed by them separately speaking to reporters was: "In most cases, doctors refer patients to hospitals in Hyderabad or Karachi for better treatment but we cannot afford the expenditure involved. Even fuel for the ambulance supposed to take a patient to Hyderabad or Karachi has to be afforded by the family concerned."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1269737>

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# August 2016

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 29TH TO SEPTEMBER 4TH 2016*

## **HIGH POVERTY LEVELS**

Dawn, August 29th, 2016

Huma Yusuf

SENATOR Sardar Mohammad Yaqoob Khan Nasar's comments about poverty — and the divine logic supposedly underpinning inequality — were obscene. However, they have stirred much-needed debate about poverty in Pakistan. One hopes the senator's shameless remarks, which revealed the perversity of privilege among our political elite, drive some introspection among our policymakers and lead to more thoughtful discourse on poverty alleviation.

Mr Nasar and his peers could start by reading a new report published by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute. *Geography of Poverty in Pakistan — 2008-09 to 2012-13: Distribution, Trends and Explanations* analyses multidimensional poverty in Pakistan at the national, provincial and district levels, highlights those districts where poverty is concentrated, and tracks the change in poverty in these districts over the five years.

In addition to considering household income and consumption data, the analysis accounts for other dimensions such as education, health, living conditions and asset ownership. The spatial and temporal approach provides helpful insights into the factors that lead to persistent poverty and the shortcomings of current poverty-reduction and growth policies.

The report confirms perceptions of stark interprovincial, intra-provincial and urban-rural differences in poverty levels. It is unlikely to come as a surprise that the highest poverty levels exist in Balochistan (62.6pc in 2012-13), followed by KP (39.3pc), Sindh (37.5pc) and Punjab (24.3pc). The high incidence of poverty in Balochistan is notable in the fact that while only 5.07pc of Pakistan's population lives there, it is home to 10.2pc of the country's poor.

The report's analysis reveals that those districts with a low population density and a higher share of rural populations are at greater risk of high poverty levels. The poorest districts are clustered in southern Punjab and Sindh, and the report emphasises the persistence of rural poverty in Sindh. (PPP Senator Taj Haider appeared sensible in media reporting on Nasar's comments, but his party's track record on poverty alleviation leaves much to be desired.)

The incidence of extreme poverty is also high in Pakistan: 18.6pc of the population suffered extreme poverty in 2012-13. Extreme poverty is concentrated in rural areas, with 26.4pc of the rural population categorised as extreme poor as compared to 3pc of the urban population.

Many factors contribute to this high incidence of poverty. The report finds that access to quality public services and good governance is low in the poorest districts of Pakistan. Access to services in such districts is mediated by local power brokers who operate according to patronage systems that reinforce poverty — this finding is essentially an empirical statement of Nasar's belief that the poor exist to till the land off which rich bureaucrats feed and thrive, and so must be left in that condition for the benefit of the elite.

Other factors contributing to the geographic concentration of poverty are the concentration of industry and infrastructure development in a few districts (where poverty is low as a result) to the exclusion of others; the failure to ensure that local communities benefit from the exploitation of natural resources in their areas; the recurrence of natural disasters in response to which the state has offered emergency relief packages but no long-term, sustainable infrastructure capacity; and conflict.

Other factors that the report recognises, but which require more research, are gender relations and the impact of migration (both internal and overseas).

Politicians are likely to seize on the finding that the poverty headcount ratio at the national level fell by 5.6pc over the five-year period under consideration. But the phenomenon of geographic concentration of poverty indicates the urgent need for targeted, tailored, and sophisticated poverty-alleviation policies. It also highlights that poverty reduction must be considered in a holistic manner, as a component within broader development, education and healthcare policies.

Specific recommendations arising out of findings can, and should, be acted upon immediately. Districts suffering extreme poverty report low satisfaction levels with public service delivery, highlighting the corruption and resulting gaps of patronage networks, and improving governance in poor, agrarian districts should be prioritised.

The government should also invest in infrastructure and develop policies aimed at building the resilience of natural disaster-prone districts. Policies regarding ownership and control of natural resources also need overhauling.

In the current climate of mega projects, talk of poverty seems passé. But recent political discourse has emphasised the need for a more informed and sustained public conversation about poverty, and a nimbler state approach to the issue. Perhaps the Senate Functional Committee can atone for Nasar's sins by kicking off a thorough policy review.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1280613>

## WHY PAKISTAN LAGS FAR BEHIND IN ACHIEVING MDGS

The Express Tribune, August 29th, 2016.

Faran Mahmood

ISLAMABAD: Imagine a country with the seventh largest army and the third largest nuclear stockpile, yet 60% of its population earns less than \$2 per day. Imagine a part of the world that has received more than \$1 billion of annual aid in the last decade but spends little budget, if any, on improving maternal health and has over 5 million out-of-school children.

It is Pakistan – the fifth-largest democracy of the world that has failed to achieve all of its Millennium Development Goals except one.

The question of the hour is: why MDGs have badly failed in Pakistan while countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have made substantial progress under the same agenda?

Ineffective governance, poor performance and undermining ownership – centrally planned, top-down approaches to foreign technical assistance programmes in Pakistan often fail to build sustainable capacity as they remain donor-driven and not demand-driven. The fact that majority of technical assistance projects fail on at least one measure of success makes a case for conducting lessons learnt reviews to benefit others embarking on similar projects. A post-mortem of such technical assistance programmes yield several insights.

The primary reason why such technical assistance programmes do not bear desired results is lack of genuine interest on the part of provincial governments as stakeholder buy-in in general and government ownership in particular is absolutely crucial in building capacity of implementing agencies.

Agencies can identify institutional problems through its reconnaissance and fact-finding missions but it should be the government that should make a business case for such assistance. Moreover in negotiations with the government, officials should not only talk at the secretary-level but should also engage middle managers, as many secretaries leave in the middle of a project. In fact, middle managers should be the 'change agents' who champion these ideas to the upper ranks.

Very often, the master schedule of a technical assistance does not account for certain well-known risks and events such as local government elections, rotation policy for DMG/PSP officers and delays in the issuance of visa for foreign consultants.

Technical assistance projects that face excessive delays should be monitored more closely and any additional use of funds to crash the project should be properly justified. Poor estimation and ineffective scope management could lead to scope creep in case of which, the business case should be reassessed and the performance of project manager should be questioned.

Donor agencies appoint foreign and national consultants with government concurrence and determine terms of references for their contracts including remuneration. Such a scenario leads to confusion as to who is their client and whose interests are to be served. Is it the government, the donor agency or people of Pakistan?

As expected, majority of consultants believe donor agency to be their client instead of the implementing agency and hence work towards pleasing donor officials for renewal of their contracts. They don't challenge assumptions of the donor agency related to programme design and are primarily focused on producing planned outputs instead of outcomes. In case, when a complicated reforms agenda is on the table, these consultants fail to negotiate with all stakeholders and propose technical solutions to very political problems.

In brief, broad-based ownership of a development programme remains the main obstacle in its sustainability. This stakeholder engagement is a time-consuming exercise but most consultants look for a 'quick fix' instead of taking simultaneous bottom-up and top-down approaches. Turnover of government and project officials is indeed a problem but higher echelons of international donor agencies should focus more on enforcing effective project governance for achieving desired outcomes in the long run.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1171495/failing-pakistan-lags-far-behind-achieving-mdgs/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 22ND TO AUGUST 28TH 2016

DISBURSEMENTS UNDER PM YOUTH LOAN SCHEME: NBP PRESIDENT ADVISES GOVERNMENT TO BE PATIENT

The Express Tribune, August 25th, 2016.

Shahbaz Rana

ISLAMABAD: The National Bank of Pakistan president has advised the government to show patience over the slow progress of the Prime Minister's Youth Business Loan (PMYBL) Scheme, saying that throwing away money should not be a criterion for its success.

NBP President Syed Iqbal Ashraf's comments came days after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed dissatisfaction over disbursements made under the flagship PM's Youth Business Loan scheme. Ashraf was speaking during a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance.

"We are also frustrated over the slow progress of the loan scheme...we have asked them to be patient," said the President while responding to a question.

He said throwing money was not a criterion of success, as the bank had to lend "very correctly and professionally."

"There is a wish list and some of it we cannot meet," he added.

The president, however, maintained that the PM wanted loans to be disbursed without any political influence. "Stringent procedures are taking more time."

PM Sharif visited the NBP headquarters in Karachi last Friday to review progress on his flagship programme.

“The Prime Minister has expressed his dissatisfaction over the pace of disbursements to prospective clients under the PMYBL in general and denial in credit to the applicants in particular,” said a PM Office handout.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif launched the scheme in December 2013 with an aim to provide loans ranging from Rs500,000 to Rs2 million, requiring funds worth Rs100-200 billion, aimed at providing jobs to the youth.

Ashraf informed the committee that so far Rs7.7 billion had been disbursed among 8,139 clients. “The disbursement figure is expected to jump to Rs17 billion as the bank is in the process of giving loans to a total of 13,500 borrowers by the end of this year.”

Ashraf further informed the panel that within six months of the announcement of the scheme, the bank received 60,000 applications. “Now about 100 to 200 people are applying every quarter, which shows a lack in interest.”

As many as 62,974 people have so far applied for the scheme.

Ashraf said over 41,000 applications had been turned down due to various reasons; many people applied for loans despite having no work experience.

The Prime Minister has ordered the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to investigate the high rate of rejection of applications, added the PM Office handout. “The huge number of rejections need to be justified; we need to encourage youth instead of frustrating them,” said the Prime Minister last week.

In September last year, the Premier had directed the NBP President to clear the entire backlog within two months. However, even after almost a year, out of 15,781 approved cases, as many as 7,642 or 48.4% cases are still pending for disbursements, according to the NBP presentation.

The NBP president gave hope that the situation would turn around in the next four months.

Out of the disbursed amount so far; three-fourths of it went to people belonging to Punjab. Applicants with K-P domicile have got 12%, Sindh 7%, Islamabad 2%, Azad Kashmir 2%, Balochistan 2% while Gilgit Baltistan residents got 1% of the disbursed loans, as per the NBP presentation to the committee.

Rashid Godil of the MQM questioned the low volume of disbursement in comparison with the amount the government had spent on advertising the scheme.

Moreover, the NBP president also briefed the committee about the bank’s performance. “NBP is the largest lender to the government and has lent Rs275 billion to the public sector enterprises out of which, Rs220 billion are given against sovereign guarantees,” he said.

Responding to a question, he said the decision to lend money to Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) was taken by the government and the bank simply implemented it.

NBP’s non-performing loans have risen to Rs120 billion and the bank has shared a plan with the SBP to recover Rs60 billion NPLs by 2018.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1169425/disbursements-pm-youth-loan-scheme-nbp-president-advises-government-patient/>

SENATOR’S VIEW OF THE POOR

Dawn, August 27th, 2016

COULD he have been joking? Maybe, there was an element of irony or cynicism in his comments about the hegemony of privilege. But the more we analyse media reports of a Senate meeting on Thursday, the clearer it becomes that the august member of the upper house Sardar Yaqoob Khan Nasar was not in a jovial mood.

Nor can his remarks be seen as an attempt at bringing out the disparity between the poverty-stricken and the privileged strata. His was an earnest evaluation as he saw it from his perch that, fortunately for him, exists at a considerable distance from the homes of the poor. Only complete ignorance on his part can explain the nonchalance that his words conveyed.

Sardar Nasar appears to think that if everyone were to become rich there would be no one to labour and till the land — this is far from an original assertion but always a timely one. According to the reports, he was ready to stand his ground as some of his colleagues in the house tried to make him take a more balanced and politically correct view of the issue. Maybe he will be brought around to accepting their advice and eventually concede that he had been indiscreet.

That would be desirable for the system but even if that does not happen, some merit can be found in the senator's comments. By speaking his mind he did provide a more realistic measure of the problem that those who have been struggling for various kinds of equalities continue to face. Such reality checks are perhaps necessary from time to time.

They are better than having 10 revered personalities debating just how cruel the world is to the underprivileged, while being convinced deep down that their speeches are not likely to change the status quo and create an impression about a benevolent world where none exists. One can thank the senator for reminding us of a mindset that will continue to hold society back.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1280183>

## SC ASKS RULERS TO FOCUS ON IMPROVING LIFE OF UNDERPRIVILEGED

Dawn, August 27th, 2016

Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday asked the rulers to discontinue their opulent, monarch-like lifestyle and instead focus all their energies and resources on elevating the condition of the underprivileged and downtrodden people by providing them basic necessities of life.

A judgement, authored by Justice Dost Mohammad Khan, predicted a gloomy and dark future for the nation as well as for the country both financially and socially if the institutions vested with the responsibility of ending corruption and the special courts established to interpret corruption laws failed to invigorate a campaign against the malaise which has been eating into the very vitals of the state.

The judgement came on an appeal moved by one Imran Mohsin against the Jan 14, 2016, Islamabad High Court verdict rejecting his bail application.

The Supreme Court, however, upheld the high court judgement.

The SC verdict observed that it was an admitted fact that destitute and hapless people of the country had been living an impoverished life due to inequalities in society because of the menace of corruption and corrupt practices that had spread to even the lowest tiers of society.

It said the way the scourge of corruption was metastasised into all vitals over the past few decades had left the institutions created to fight the bane of corruption, especially the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), with no choice to initiate specialised and expert training among their investigators and prosecutors.

Such training should be developed in a way that should go hand-in-hand with the need of the hour because such offences come under white-collar crimes, a kind very difficult to detect by ordinary officers of the institutions, the judgement said.

“It is high time that only honest officers equipped with a scientific and technologically advanced training should be employed in the institutions like NAB,” the verdict said, adding that it was the duty of the heads of such institutions to discipline their investigators and prosecutors by keeping an eye on them and minutely supervising their performance. Otherwise, it said, such heads of the institutions should be considered guilty of dereliction of duty.

The judgement said: “This is the need of the time because the embezzled money involved in the corruption runs in millions and billions (of rupees) and it is very easy for the offenders to offer bribery to buy the loyalty of the officers investigating the plundering of the money, especially from the national kitty.

“In the eyes of the law, such a case when happens causes more harm to the society than the actual offence of embezzlement and, therefore, it should entail serious punishment from the courts.

“It is the foremost duty of every ruler to guard the national exchequer from all attempts to loot and plunder by employing transparent mechanisms, otherwise the oppressed and disadvantaged people will be forced to commit suicide if the corruption is not discouraged at all levels of the society.

“Our motherland has not been gifted to us rather scores of people had to shed their blood and sacrificed with their lives to achieve a sovereign state. Thus the superior and lower courts should play a vibrant role in this regard.”

The judgement regretted that although people from all walks of life were in the forefront against the menace of corruption by raising their voice, unfortunately a majority of them avoided exercising the same principles in their daily life — a situation which was no less than a national tragedy.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1280270>

45% CHILDREN IN PAKISTAN UNDER FED, SAYS REPORT

The Express Tribune, August 28th, 2016.

Maryam Usman

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan ranks low on the social development index of child and maternal health, which reflects the level of nutrition, education and access to health services.

Although infant and neonatal mortality rates have considerably decreased worldwide over the last two decades, the situation has not improved in the country. One in every 14 Pakistani children dies before reaching the age of one, and one in 11 does not survive to its fifth birthday, states a report compiled by the office of the federal ombudsman in collaboration with the Unicef.

Childhood poverty is directly linked to malnutrition, where parents fail to provide adequate healthcare and nutrition to their children.

A considerable number of children and mothers have no or limited access to health and education services. According to Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012-13, around 45% of children show evidence of chronic malnutrition or stunting and 11% are acutely malnourished requiring urgent treatment.

“Stunting slows down mental and physical growth,” Dr Irshad Danish, National Programme Coordinator for Scaling Nutrition-Civil Society Alliance told The Express Tribune.



Quoting the figure of 45% malnutrition in the country, he said, “This means our future generation will not only be mentally and physically stunted, but will also be unskilled and lag behind the competing world.” He urged that the government improve the situation of malnutrition in the country, besides enforcing implementation on the existing legislation on breastfeeding.

Pakistan is amongst the nine countries, which have the largest number of primary-age group out-of-school children.

Estimates for out-of-school children show that there are 6.7 million out-of-school children in the country, of which 55% are girls.

Given their relative higher populations, there are 3.1 million and 1.9 million out-of-school children in Punjab and Sindh respectively, followed by Balochistan at 0.56 million and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa at 0.48 million.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1171220/appalling-stats-45-children-pakistan-fed-says-report/>

#### FACING THE HUNGER TIDE: THE ODDS ARE NOT IN OUR FAVOUR

The Express Tribune, August 28th, 2016.

KARACHI: Growing up we always heard that at least people don't sleep hungry in Pakistan, remarked Collective for Social Science founding member Haris Gazdar. “Well, it's a lie.”

A recent national nutrition survey reveals that about one-third households in Pakistan have experienced hunger, he said, adding that this is also reiterated by the proportion of people living below the average caloric level.

“On average, 50% of people in the country are hungrier than they ought to be.” However, the discussion around hunger is monopolised by classes that are not hungry, he added.

Gazdar was speaking at an event, ‘Does Climate Change Worsen Hunger?’ held at Habib University on Friday evening. The discussion pivoted around the need to include food security as a valid concern in the climate change debate.

“Many countries suffer from malnutrition, hunger, lack of food security and climate change but we never look at the issues together,” said United Nations special rapporteur on right to food since June 2014 Dr Hilal Elver. Even during climate change negotiations, the issue of food security is never raised, she added.

One of the reasons why we fail to solve these issues is because we separate them and not look at them together, she said. “For instance, crops such as corn and maize are dedicated for the production of bio-fuel, which seeks to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the air. This solution to climate change adversely affects food security as about 40% of corn in the United States is used to produce bio-fuel,” she pointed out.

Speaking about the importance of food security, she said that about 95% of hungry people are living in developing countries but malnutrition is present in every country.

People often say if you are hungry you shouldn't question the quality of food you are fed, remarked Dr Elver. However, that is the one question that must be asked, she stressed.

Climate change affects agricultural activities not just in terms of quantity such as low yield but it leads to high concentration of carbon dioxide which affects the quality of food, pointed out Dr Elver.

Even ‘climate smart agriculture’ basically benefits corporations as it focuses on increasing production-based activities, she said, adding that the logic is that if people are hungry the more food must be produced. “However, we produce more than enough.”

Reiterating the point raised by Dr Elver, international law professor at Princeton University, Dr Richard Anderson Falk, said “There is incentive for powerful sectors of private economy to not acknowledge the issue.” He added that for instance, the fossil fuel industry has confused the discourse by pretending there isn’t a real problem. “However, when you defer problems to the future, you aggravate the nature of the challenge making it more expensive and difficult.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1171156/facing-hunger-tide-odds-not-favour/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 15TH TO AUGUST 21ST 2016

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

Dr Hafiz A Pasha

The Planning Commission has recently published a report on Multidimensional Poverty in collaboration with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the UNDP in Pakistan. The primary source of data is the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLSMS) carried out periodically by the PBS.

The transition from income or basic needs approach to measurement of poverty on a multidimensional basis is an important step forward. It provides a comprehensive view of the sources of poverty and enables the development of a strategic framework of policies and programmes for alleviating poverty. The report also identifies the incidence of poverty at a regionally disaggregated level down to the districts of Pakistan.

According to the report, multidimensional poverty has declined from a headcount of 55.2% of the population in 2004-05 to 38.8% in 2014-15. Despite fluctuations in the growth rate of the economy and variation in the degree of inclusiveness of the growth process, Pakistan has apparently been successful in bringing down poverty on a continuing basis, especially during the tenure of the last PPP government.

The fall in poverty is visible in each Province and in the urban and rural areas of the country. At the district level, only 11 districts out of the total of 115 districts in the country have witnessed an increase in the incidence of poverty.

However, the decline reported in incidence of multidimensional poverty in Pakistan is not consistent with other findings. The global Human Development Report of the UNDP gives estimates of multidimensional poverty in each country.

According to the latest report of 2015, multidimensional poverty in Pakistan has increased from a headcount of 43.5% of the population in 2006-07 to 45.6% in 2012-13. However, it is reassuring to note that the poverty headcount ratio is lower in Pakistan than in India or Bangladesh.

The Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) has also undertaken research earlier on multidimensional poverty. Sophisticated statistical techniques have been used for measurement of poverty. The key finding is that the incidence of multidimensional poverty fell from 49.4% of the population in 2005 to 47.4% in 2009. It has, however, risen to 48.2% by 2011. What explains these contradictory findings?

The primary reason for the difference in the findings on the trend of poverty in Pakistan is in the choice of indicators. The Planning Commission report uses 15 indicators to measure poverty. Three indicators relate to the level and access to education, four to health and eight to the standard of living.

The Global HDR of UNDP uses ten indicators. Two indicators relate to education, two to health and six to the standard of living. The big difference between the two approaches is in the health indicators. In its latest estimate for Pakistan, UNDP focuses on the incidence of malnutrition among women and children in a household and on the level of child mortality.

The Planning Commission looks at access to health facilities, immunization, ante-natal care and assisted delivery. Malnutrition is not included in the indicators, as the PSLSMS does not contain this information.

One-third of the combined weight in measurement of multidimensional poverty is attached to health indicators. The incidence of malnutrition among children has been increasing sharply in Pakistan according to the Nutrition Surveys carried out periodically. The number of children either stunted or wasted has risen rapidly. This is attributed primarily to the decline in food security of the people, especially in terms of affordability.

The exclusion of malnutrition in the Planning Commission set of poverty indicators introduces a significant bias in the findings. The rise in malnutrition clearly has had negative implications on the trend of poverty in the country, which is not captured in the estimates by the Planning Commission.

The SPDC study also does not include malnutrition as an indicator. However, the status of employment; either employed or unemployed, of the head of the household is incorporated in the indicators on the standard of living. This is an appropriate indicator of likely incidence of poverty in a household.

The unemployment rate in Pakistan has shown a fluctuating trend. It was relatively low up to 2009 and since then has been rising. It is not surprising that SPDC concludes that multidimensional poverty fell from 2005 to 2009 and has increased thereafter from 2009 to 2011. The Planning Commission report also does not focus on unemployment.

Overall, it appears that the choice of indicators by the Planning Commission for measuring multidimensional poverty understates not only the level of poverty but also tends to create a bias towards a declining trend, when the underlying reality may be rising or, more or less, unchanged incidence of poverty in Pakistan, especially in line with the decline in the last seven years in the growth rate of the economy.

The remaining part of the comments focus on the incidence of multidimensional poverty in 2014-15 and not on the trend since 2004-05.

According to the Planning Commission report, the incidence of multidimensional poverty in 2014-15 is only 9.4% in urban areas as compared to 54.6% in rural areas. This difference is much larger than that observed either in the case of income poverty or basic needs poverty. This is due to the differential access to basic health, education and economic services.

However, there are reasons why the incidence of multidimensional poverty may be understated in urban areas, given the approach adopted for measurement. First, there is the non-inclusion of an employment indicator. The unemployment rate in urban areas in 2014-15 was substantially higher at 8% as compared to 5% in rural areas.

Second, the issue is not only of access to a service but also to the quality of service provided. For example, over 85% of the households in the primate city of Pakistan, Karachi, have access to tap water. But, unfortunately, little water flows out of the taps, especially in lower income neighborhoods.

Similarly, the quality of service provided in government hospitals in district or tehsil headquarters is poor, with an acute shortage of beds and medicines. Consequently, lower income urban households have to seek the services of low quality private practitioners. Further, the level of power load shedding varies substantially among locations.

Therefore, the PSLSMS questionnaire needs to be expanded to also capture the quality of service provided and employment status, with the multidimensional poverty indicators being refined accordingly. This is likely to raise the level of urban multidimensional poverty and narrow the gap with rural poverty.

An extremely surprising finding is that among the different regions, Azad Jammu and Kashmir has the lowest incidence of multidimensional poverty. It was 24.9 % as compared to the national average of 38.8%. This is not consistent with the fact that unemployment rate in AJ&K is extremely high at over 14%, more than twice the national average in 2012-13.

The next lowest incidence is in Punjab, followed by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The extremely high incidence of poverty in FATA may be one of the root causes of the rise in extremism and terrorism in this part of country.

Lack of education contributes most to poverty

The combined contribution of education indicators to multidimensional poverty in Pakistan is the highest at 42.8% in 2014-15. This is not surprising given the relatively low literacy and primary enrolment rates, especially in the rural areas. Next in importance is the standard of living with a contribution of 31.6%. The smallest contribution is by the health related factors of 25.6%.

However, according to the global UNDP human development report the impact of health indicators is higher at 32.3% in 2012-13. This highlights again the importance of including a malnutrition indicator in the measurement of multidimensional poverty.

The difference in poverty among districts is most pronounced in Sindh, as measured by the difference in poverty incidence between the best and worst districts, respectively. Balochistan comes next in this indicator, followed by Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, a more sophisticated measure of variation in poverty across districts in a province is required.

Also, given the small sample size on average at the district level in the PSLSMS, the reliability of estimates is low. For example, the district of Awaran in Balochistan had a head count of poverty of 84.3% in 2008-09. This fell sharply in two years to 58.9% in 2010-11, but rose to 93% in the next two years. Such large fluctuations in such short spans of time are unlikely. Further, changes in district boundaries by creation of new districts have to be allowed for.

The PSLSMS also includes questions on perceptions of respondent households about their economic situation. In each survey, over the period 2008-09 to 2014-15, almost 80% of the households have reported that their condition has either remained unchanged or worsened. Clearly, the response should have been more positive if poverty was falling rapidly.

The Planning Commission rightly recommends that the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) should be used in future to complement existing official measures of poverty. Also, the MPI may be used as a basis for resource allocation, especially at the district level.

The recommendation that MPI variables be included in the next Census questionnaire may not be feasible. However, the PSLSMS survey should be expanded both in terms of sample size and by inclusion of measures of employment and nutrition status. It is also necessary to promote greater involvement of local research institutions in this important exercise.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/08/15/20-page/785809-news.html>

FEATURE: TAKING THE STING OUT OF POVERTY

Dawn, Sunday Magazine, August 21st, 2016

Rafiullah Mandokhail

On a hot sluggish morning, wearing a net-cap to prevent bee stings, 50-year-old Mosam Khan is busy in his newly-established camp at the centre of Tamarix forest locally known as 'Ghaz' close to the grid station on Waziristan Road. Hundreds of wooden honeybee boxes lie strewn besides the highway leading to a militancy-hit tribal agency.

"Don't go close to the boxes, if the bees get disturbed, they might sting you," the beekeeper warns, inspecting one of the traditionally made hives, before he shook hands.

A native of Nowrang Bannu in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mosam Khan has been running the apiaries for over two decades. But this is his first ever honey-collecting camp set up in the bordering district, Zhob.

Khan says that he was a labourer and also worked as a woodcutter and brick-kiln worker before he undertook beekeeping in 1994. Starting the business with 30 bee boxes, today he owns 500 honey-producing boxes and earns thrice the amount he earned otherwise.

While Khan is content with his work, he claims that severe hot and cold weather, deforestation, off-season rains and stagnant water around beehives led to a drastic decline in the population of honeybees and honey production in the country, pushing a number of beekeepers out of business.

His perceptions about the decline in honey production are belied by the actual figures. But he is one 'lucky' beekeeper with a story different from the others.

Speaking Banochi, a dialect of Pashto, Khan says that he used to set up camp in the Shawal tehsil of North Waziristan. Since operation Zarb-i-Azb got underway in the area, however, he does not go there anymore. Now he travels to other parts of the country including Balochistan.

"The deteriorating security situation of the area and the military operation are the major reasons behind my migration from KP to Balochistan," says Khan. "This is how I earn bread and butter for my family of five children who help me in my work instead of going to school."

Pointing towards the boxes he says, each hive box costs 2,000 to 6,000 rupees and houses approximately 5,000 honeybees. "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is rich in beekeeping with thousands of beekeepers and honeybee colonies in every nook and corner of the province," he adds.

Having spent 22 years in the profession, Khan says that Pakistan exports honey to more than two dozen countries but Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates are the biggest buyers of Pakistani honey.

According to him the colour and flavour of honey vary naturally, depending on the blossoms which are the nectar source. Lighter-coloured honey is generally mild in flavour, while the darker one is usually stronger in flavour.

He elaborates that Jujube (red date) honey is dark; sunflower honey is bright yellow with delicate sweetness; Alfalfa (seh barg) nectar produces white to extra light amber honey that has a mild flavour and aroma similar to beeswax, Calcacia (Palosa) and Eucalyptus nectar yields greyish honey while Hyssop honey is white in colour.

Jujube trees are in abundance in Zhob region along with other honey-producing trees such as Eucalyptus, Tamarix, Acacia, Hyssop and many others.

Showing a bottle of dark honey, he explains that Sidr honey, dark in colour has a distinctive aroma and is considered one of the most expensive and finest honeys in the world. It is exported to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries.

He adds that there is an ever-increasing demand for it in the Arab world due to its fine quality and taste. "It is made from the nectar of the Jujube blossoms and dark honey has higher medicinal value as compared to other honeys.

While opening one of the honey jars that are displayed near his roadside tent to attract passersby, Mosam says the honey collected in various parts of the country is transported to a Peshawar market, from where it is packed in 20kg plastic cans and sent to Saudi Arabia and other countries. There it is branded and repackaged.

"High-quality honey is exported abroad, while honey of inferior quality is consumed within the country. Honey is a great source of nutrition while beeswax is used in cosmetics," he explains.

Talking about his hectic journey to Zhob valley, Khan says that as the ‘beeing’ season approaches, he and his family travel with hundreds of boxes and other material to Balochistan. He also experimented with Ziarat and Musakhail districts last year but Zhob, according to him, is the most suitable for honey production as it has dense forests of Tamarix and other trees.

“The fields of Tamarix and other trees are abundant and the atmosphere of the area is also ideal for beekeeping. But both government and community support is required,” he says. Mosam encourages the local people to take up beekeeping.

Khan says it takes the honey about a month to ripen. In some areas the beekeepers are not in a position to bear the expenses of shifting camps, feeding and medication — beekeepers use medicine/chemicals to improve queen and colony health.

The majority of beekeepers belong to poor families and some of them lead miserable lives as the beekeeping business is fraught with a host of problems, while the government which has so far given a cold shoulder to those engaged in the business has yet to recognise it as a legitimate industry. “This sector is running without any government support and patronage,” he laments.

The director of Honeybee Research Institute at the National Agricultural Research Centre, Pakistan, Dr Rashid Mehmood, says that the ancient, traditional method of honey beekeeping with indigenous species *Apis cerana* has been replaced with modern beekeeping, adding that Western honeybee *Apis mellifera* colonies have been introduced to the beekeepers.

“More than 400,000 colonies of *Apis mellifera* exist, increasing honey production in the country from 7,500 metric tons to 10,000 metric tons generating 35 million to 40 million rupees as revenue,” he said.

Balochistan’s North-eastern district Zhob (Fort Sandeman) is an area of lush green mountains, a great diversity of forest wealth and natural flora where bee-farming activity can be done very easily and freely.

The area is very suitable on account of different ecological zones containing rich bee flora and friendly climatic conditions. Zhob shares borders with Afghanistan and South Waziristan agency. The source of income here is agriculture, livestock or private and government employment, while some failing to find jobs locally are moving to gulf countries.

Alamgir Mandokhail, head of the Nutrition Programme and resident of a nearby village, says that the area has the most unique wild species of honeybees, and is quite suitable for apiculture due to its favourable climatic and environmental conditions.

“If the business is promoted here, not only hundreds of poor people of the area could earn their livelihood but it will also improve the socioeconomic status of thousands of people,” he says. He further adds that the business can prove to be an environmentally sound, income-generating activity. The region has great potential to prove itself a major honey producer in Balochistan, where majority of the people live below the poverty line.

“It is an innovative way to save precious forests that are being cut down. Apiculture can easily be adopted here as it requires very little investment,” Alamgir says optimistically.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278689>

#### FOUR MORE INFANTS DIE IN THAR

Dawn, August 20th, 2016

MITHI: Three more infants died at the Mithi civil hospital here and one at the rural health centre (RHC) in Islamkot on Friday, raising the toll to 315 this year, according to officials.

The death toll continued to rise in the drought-hit Thar despite tall claims of the health department. According to unofficial figures, the death toll has risen to 450 with the death of four more kids.

District Health Officer Dr Chandar Lal said the despite increasing number of deaths the situation was under control.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278667/four-more-infants-die-in-thar>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 8TH TO AUGUST 14TH 2016

ALLOCATION AND SPENDING IS POLITICALLY DRIVEN IN PAKISTAN, SAYS UNDP

Express Tribune, August 10th, 2016.

Shahbaz Rana

ISLAMABAD: The concentration of public spending is politically driven and only restricted to a few developed districts, which is increasing inequality between the rich and poor regions of Pakistan, said the outgoing chief of United Nations Development Programme, Marc Andre, Tuesday.

“Investment (of public funds) in Lahore, the most developed district of Punjab, is six times more than the allocations of the Seraiki belt of the province,” said Andre, while speaking at a seminar organised to highlight the growing inequality in the country.

Politically driven fund allocations, absence of land reforms, anti-poor, pro-rich tax system and privatisation are said to be the key reasons for the growing inequality in Pakistan.

According to Andre, the allocation of fund is a political decision and there were structural problems in the way money was allocated in Pakistan. “A good amount of public fund is allocated to the members of assemblies under political consideration.”

The UNDP Chief’s comments highlight growing frustrations over the way federal and provincial governments have been allocating resources, which, according to experts, is becoming a cause for growing inequality among various districts of the country.

A recent UNDP-funded report revealed that Pakistan’s richest 20% now consumed seven times more than the poorest 20% population due to rising inequality.

The income share of the lowest 20% population has further shrunk to only 6.8% while that of the richest 20% increased to 48.9%.

The report states that 38.8% of Pakistan’s population lives in poverty.

A majority of the rural population (54.6%) lives in acute poverty while this ratio is only 9.4% in urban areas, emphasising the need to make rural-centric economic policies.

“As much as 80% to 85% of total physical expenditures of the province are incurred in Lahore,” said Dr Akmal Hussain, a renowned economist and social activist.

He said in Punjab, some districts were as well off as any developed country; while some districts are at par with sub-Saharan African countries.

On the human development index (HDI) ranking, Lahore is at number 1 position compared to Rajanpur that ranks 69, Dera Ghazi Khan 64, Muzaffargarh 58 and Bhakkar 51.

Instead of channelling funds to the underdeveloped Seraiki belt districts of Punjab, funds are heavily concentrated in Lahore.

Dr Hussain said the state was becoming an ‘economic apartheid state’ due to concentration of funds in the few already developed districts. “Public policy is the source of growing inequality as it is focused on providing services to the rich.”

Meanwhile, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund Head Qazi Azmat Essa suggested the Planning Commission to devise a mechanism to determine whether the new public sector spending was going to Lahore or southern-Rajanpur district, which is at the bottom of HDI.

“In case of Balochistan, excluding Quetta; the province’s best performing districts are worse than the worst performing districts of Punjab,” said Planning Commission Social Sector Member Dr Naeem-ul-Zafar.

However, Punjab Chief Economist Dr Amanullah said that after the publication of the ‘Multidimensional Poverty’ report in June this year, the Punjab government was in the process of formulating a strategy to focus on developing the bottom 10 districts.

“Escaping the inequality trap is the 21st century’s most critical challenge,” said Marc Andre. “The governments have sufficient resources in their hands and the actual issue is proper utilisation of the allocated funds.”

Also present, the economist S Akbar Zaidi suggested the state to distribute its 2.6 million acres of land among peasants to reduce inequality in the country.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1159053/growing-inequality-allocation-spending-politically-driven-says-undp/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 7TH 2016

PML-N’S LOW-COST HOUSING SCHEME LIMITED TO FILES

The Express Tribune, August 1st, 2016.

Riazul Haq

ISLAMABAD: At a time when the government claims that it is focusing on development projects across the country, one of its flagship programmes of constructing homes for the low-income segment of society is awaiting implementation.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced Apna Ghar Housing Scheme in 2013, but so far, the meetings, mappings and follow-up huddles have yielded nothing. The scheme is limited to files only, officials said.

The housing ministry sends a summary to Prime Minister’s Secretariat and months later it is returned with more questions, ministry officials said. The project has yet to be placed before the cabinet for any discussion, they said.

Sources in the ministry revealed the scheme was on the least priority agenda of the government. “Progress is nowhere in sight, at least in the on-going financial year,” said an official requesting anonymity. The first reply to a housing ministry’s summary from the PM Secretariat came in June this year, when the office sought business plan for the project. The reply came one year after the last correspondence.

The manifesto of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vowed to provide low-cost housing. “At least 1,000 clusters of 500 houses each for low-income families will be developed on a public private partnership mode,” states the manifesto of the party.

As per the Apna Ghar Scheme, the provinces will provide the land free of charge and the federal government will construct 500,000 housing units around Pakistan in five years.



However, the scheme could never take off, sources said. The housing ministry, prior to the 2016-17 budget asked for Rs350 million for the scheme, including Rs35 million for the project's secretariat in Islamabad, they said.

The government, as per budget documents, only allocated Rs10 million in the new fiscal year for the project's secretariat and also directed the ministry not to establish a separate setup and instead turn the ministry into sub-office of the Apna Ghar Scheme. According to the ministry's official, so far, land has been identified for the project in Jhelum and Gwadar and some other areas of Balochistan.

Similarly, the project has yet to get a permanent chief executive and related staff to run the programme as another summary for these appointments is pending with the PM for over eight months. Currently, a joint secretary of the ministry is holding acting charge.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1153279/pml-ns-low-cost-housing-scheme-limited-files/>

## MALNUTRITION CONTINUES TO TAKE TOLL ON THARI CHILDREN

Dawn, August 3rd, 2016

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: The outbreak of diseases and malnutrition were continuing to play havoc with the lives of newborns and minor children in drought-hit Thar as three more children died in Islamkot and Mithi on Tuesday, sources told Dawn.

Six-month-old Harish and five-month-old Allah Wasayo died in Rural Health Centre Islamkot while a minor child, Mukesh Kumar, died in Civil Hospital Mithi raising death toll to 433 of the year, according to unofficial reports.

However, health officials told Dawn on Tuesday that over the past seven months 289 children had died in hospitals of Tharparkar and 465 were referred to Hyderabad and Karachi for further treatment.

When district health officer of Tharparkar Dr Chandar Lal was asked about this, he was not sure about the survival of those referred, adding he had already directed civil surgeon of Mithi Civil Hospital Dr Mohammad Iqbal Bhurgari to contact officials of those hospitals and report him about exact figures.

The DHO said since January 1 this year 63,582 children suffering from various diseases were brought to six health facilities of the district for treatment and 6,353 were admitted and treated.

Speaking to Dawn, many parents with their sick children in Mithi, Islamkot, Diplo and Chhachhro towns' hospitals, complained about callous and indifferent attitude of doctors and paramedics and lack of facilities in hospitals.

They said that officials at the Mithi Civil Hospital were forcing them to take their children to Hyderabad without providing fuel to ambulances.

They urged the newly elected Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Health Minister Dr Sikender Ali Mandhro to take notice of the continued protests by the area people in this regard.

It is pertinent to mention that according to unofficial reports, over 433 children had died in hospitals and before reaching any health facilities this year.

The CEO of the Health and Nutrition Development Society (HANDS), Dr Shaikh Tanweer Ahmed, told Dawn that there was an urgent need for taking prompt action to save children and expectant mothers in Thar, which this year too had not received sufficient rains and was bracing itself for yet another worst drought in the region

He said women in Thar were facing the worst food crisis, which ultimately resulted in deaths of newborns.

“There is an urgent need to provide quality food to pregnant women in the region.”

Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani affiliated with the Pakistan Muslim League-N in Thar held the provincial government responsible for the ‘mess’ created in Thar due to alleged indifferent and callous attitude towards the genuine problems facing Thar for decades.

Dr Vankwani claimed that still dozens of dispensaries and health units in the remote villages were lying nonoperational.

He asked the chief minister of Sindh to form a board comprising elected members from Thar to visit the whole Thar and make a comprehensive report on the health crisis.

Deputy commissioner of Tharparkar Dr Shahzad Tahir Thaheem said 10th phase of wheat distribution was almost completed and that the government was trying its utmost to provide basic health facilities to Tharis.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274947>

## INCREASING INEQUALITY IN PAKISTAN

Business Recorder, August 04, 2016

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publication Development Advocate Pakistan (DAP) on Inequality in Pakistan that was released last week makes some disturbing observations with respect to widening income inequality between the haves and the have-nots. The report while acknowledging that there has been a reduction in income and non-income poverty states that “inequality, both income and wealth-based, has largely increased globally as well as in Pakistan”.

The report further adds that “while consumption-based poverty dropped from 57.9 percent to 29.5 percent between 1998/99 and 2013/14, and multidimensional poverty – which includes health, education and living standards – fell from 55.2 percent to 38.8 percent between 2004/05 and 2014/15, inequality has grown. In 1987/88, the Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, was 0.35; by 2013/14 it had risen to 0.41. Pakistan’s richest 20 percent now consume seven times more than the poorest 20 percent”.

A major portion of the blame for this rise in inequality stems from successive Pakistani governments’ unwavering espousal of the trickle-down theory which effectively supports policies that facilitate those engaged in productive sectors on grounds that as productivity rises so would growth and employment opportunities – benefits of which in turn would trickle down to the poor.

Two well-known opponents of the effectivity of the trickle-down theory are Warren Buffet and Senator Elizabeth Warren. Buffet recently stated that “taxes for the lower and middle class and maybe even the upper middle class should even probably be cut further... I think that people at the high end – people like myself – should be paying a lot more in taxes. We have it better than we’ve ever had it;” Elizabeth Warren while attending the launch of Thomas Piketty’s new book, Capital in the Twenty-First Century, stated that “he’s (the author) got good historical data, and boy, what it shows is trickle-down doesn’t work. Never did, doesn’t work.”

The one major reason for rising inequality in Pakistan relates to our tax system which remains grossly inequitable, unfair and anomalous. The massive rise in direct tax collections, a tax that can be supported as it is levied on the ability to pay principal or essentially on income from various sources, is increasingly being sourced in Pakistan not to income but to consumption of services/commodities.

Or in other words, the tax referred to as withholding tax in official documents, budgeted to account for around 75 percent of all direct tax collections in the current year, is being levied in the sales tax mode. Needless to add, in other countries withholding tax is levied on sources of income say rent income, agriculture income etc, which qualify it to be referred to as a direct tax and not on a tax on services/goods which would qualify it as an indirect tax whose incidence on the poor is greater than on the rich.

Be that as it may, the bulk of our annual revenue is collected under indirect taxes notably sales tax, customs duties and federal excise – taxes that are passed on their entirety to the consumers and hence their incidence, like the withholding tax, is on the end user. One can only hope that the Ministry of Finance begins the reform process of the tax system which remains bogged down by the ease in collections rather than to render it equitable which would have a cascading effect on the income inequality data.

Disturbingly, the UNDP in its report added that in 1968 Dr Mahbubul Haq while referring to the 22 richest families in the country called for “reforming Pakistan’s economic, social and political institutions to help prevent the concentration of such immense wealth amongst the few” but concluded that “although the landscape has changed considerably since then, his recommendations remain painfully valid.

Pakistan’s institutions, incentives, laws and norms continue to conspire to create rent for the rich and burden for the poor... to date, Pakistan’s response to inequality has been superficial, focusing on symptoms rather than root causes.”

To conclude, there is an urgent need for the government to focus on bridging the rising inequality gap and this would require revisiting the budgetary expenditure priorities as well as the revenue sources. Clearly Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is not and must not be regarded as an end all of the government’s responsibility with respect to dealing with inequality and efforts are required, in the words of the UNDP report, to address “both its structural and distributional dimensions. Key institutions need to be reformed, and fiscal, monetary and other policies made equitable.”

<http://www.brecorder.com/editorials/0:/71739:increasing-inequality-in-pakistan/?date=2016-08-04>

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## September 2016

**NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 26TH TO OCTOBER 2ND 2016**

**WHEN EMPLOYMENT SUSTAINS GROWTH**

Business Recorder, Sep 27, 2016

Youth unemployment, mass under-employment, and the post-recession risk of jobless growth and recovery aptly describe the present global economic landscape, including that of Pakistan. Global unemployment increased from 170 million in 2007 to nearly 202m in 2012, of which about 75m are young women and men.

In recent years, poor employment and working conditions, including those in global supply chains or for migrant workers, have also made headlines. Roughly half the world’s population still lives on the equivalent of about two dollars per day. And in too many places, having a job doesn’t guarantee the ability to escape from poverty.

This slow and uneven progress requires rethinking and reworking economic and social policies aimed at eradicating poverty. A continued lack of decent work opportunities, insufficient investments and under-consumption lead to an erosion of the basic social contract underlying democratic societies: that all must share in progress.

Unlike its Millennium Development Goals predecessor, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 empowers governments to break free from the shackles of aid and propels nation-states towards making greater strides in trade, growth, jobs and safeguarding the dignity of individuals, communities and nations. And, for the first time, there is an unequivocal opportunity for the private sector and businesses to join hands with governments and the international community, and test their mettle in the cause for sustainable development.

SDG 8 provides a roadmap that focuses on six target areas to placing governments on the trajectory of inclusive and sustainable growth, employment and decent work, including putting in place fiscal and social development measures

that sustain economic growth; creating equitable economic growth; ensuring sustainable use of natural resources, so that future generations have the opportunity to use them as well; and generating full employment where the economy is operating at its peak economic potential.

Although ambitious, these are achievable for Pakistan. The past decade has been one of marked economic progress in this country as the GDP per capita rose by an average of 4pc annually, while income-based poverty declined sharply, from 64.3pc in 2001 to 2002 to 29.5pc in 2013-14, according to the 2016 Multidimensional Poverty Index. Pakistan's export revenues witnessed a rise in 2015, improving business performance in terms of productivity and quality, greater competitiveness and stronger market linkages.

For instance, last year, 50 public departments, 200 private businesses and 500,000 individuals benefited from UN efforts to boost trade in agricultural and industrial sectors. With the fisheries sector, livelihoods of thousands have been secured by efforts to revitalise the industry, including offering training to 2,000 fishermen.

Compliance with global standards not only led to the European Union lifting a seven-year ban on Pakistani fish imports in 2013, but it has since prompted a steady stream imports — including 80 consignments to the EU, surpassing \$8m. Pakistan is also one of the only three countries in South-Asia that has ratified all eight labour standards, and provincial governments are introducing and revising labour policies and laws to ensure implementation of global standards.

Efforts are ongoing with support from development partners to strengthen social protection, so as to ensure continuous income and the ability to lift people above the poverty line.

Lack of decent work opportunities is one of the roadblocks to inclusive and sustainable growth.—White Star

However, the government cannot afford to be complacent. Whilst keeping pace with the demand for enough jobs to absorb the growing labour force is a challenge for most countries, Pakistan needs to create an additional two million jobs per annum in the next 38 years to meet the increasing demand of an overwhelming youth population.

Women's labour force participation is one of the lowest in the world at 22pc. Paradoxically, because more than 70pc of the country's economy is informal and women are over-represented within this area — home-based workers, for example, are yet to be fully recognised under the labour laws.

Therefore, urgent attention is required to elevate women's inclusion in the formal workforce. The exclusion allows them little or no access to decent wages or social security benefits. The lack of available data is one of the foremost issues that hamper effective advocacy efforts for the adoption of relevant policies and legislation impacting informal workers.

Moreover, the achievement of goals and targets under SDG 8 is closely linked to the implementation of Vision 2025 — and in particular its pillar on sustained indigenous and inclusive growth. Effective coordination and co-operation between the government, private sectors and the international community has shown results.

But the key driver is how the government will generate gender-responsive and productive employment, rather than just employment, and how it will create inclusive, sustainable, economic growth rather than growth at all costs. The state and businesses will have to adapt their approach towards employment creation and labour policies if they are to tackle entrenched multi-dimensional challenges to meet the targets of SDG 8. And, importantly, while doing so, human dignity must remain central to inclusive economic growth policies.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1286219>

NEW MODE: BISP EYES BIOMETRIC COVERAGE BY END-2017  
The Express Tribune, September 27th, 2016.

Sehrish Wasif

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will begin implementing its new biometric payment mechanism across the country by December next year.

The decision was taken on Monday during the 27th board meeting of BISP in which the members also approved the concept and design of the new payment model and ordered the authorities concerned to submit it to the finance division as soon as possible.

BISP is shifting all modes of payments – via mobile phones, Benazir Debit Cards and Pakistan Post – to biometric verification system in three phases, starting from September this year.

A BISP official, who wished not to be named, said: “The new payment system is aimed at excluding the middleman.”

At present, he said, the system has been introduced in a few districts, but the new mode of payment would be introduced all over the country by the end of 2017.

“After the introduction of biometric system, almost 98 per cent of BISP beneficiaries will be able to receive payments while people who are missing their thumbs or have weak thumb impressions will get personalised ATM cards,” said the official.

Detailing problems faced by beneficiaries, he said: “The new payment system will address the issue of loss of debit cards and /or forgetting ATM pin code. There were few beneficiaries who lost their debit cards and to get a new one they had to wait a long time,” he said.

The official said that the BISP will submit the new payment model to the Finance Division for approval. After the approval, the project management will start the process of hiring new payment agencies.

A communique stated that the new payment system would enhance financial inclusion through provision of regular bank accounts besides increasing payment points in rural areas.

BISP’s budget for fiscal year 2016-17 amounting to Rs115 billion was also presented during the meeting which was later referred to the Programme Design Committee and Finance Committee of the board for further deliberations.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1189082/new-mode-bisp-eyes-biometric-coverage-end-2017/>

## GOVT LINKS POVERTY CUT TO CPEC DEVELOPMENT

Dawn, September 28th, 2016

Khawar Ghumman

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) considers the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a panacea for all ills, including the rampant poverty plaguing the country.

According to Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning and Development, CPEC will play an important role in achieving targets set under the Vision 2025 plan.

In a written response laid before the National Assembly, the minister stated: “Pakistan Vision 2025 sets the target of reducing multidimensional poverty by half from the headcount of 40.8pc witnessed in 2012-13.

“CPEC will provide an opportunity for provision of affordable energy to all and upgrade connectivity around the country which will create more opportunities for all.”

Moreover, the minister said, the government was planning to take the economic growth rate to beyond 7pc in the medium-term, which would also help its efforts to bring down the poverty rate in the country.

However, for independent economists like Dr Kaiser Bengali the country was currently witnessing downward trends in key sectors, which could actually play a real role in the creation of new jobs that would help fight endemic poverty.

For example, Dr Bengali explained, industry was increasingly closing down and this was manifested in the trend of falling exports and rising imports under present government.

The only sectors witnessing growth nowadays include the stock exchange, real estate development and the commodities market, which are largely based on speculation and have nothing to do with job creation. Dr Bengali observed: “The Gwadar-Kashgar road will prove to be another Afghan transit trade-like arrangement, only affecting country’s remaining industry.”

But in his answer, the minister was far more than optimistic.

Other measures that, in his opinion, would help the government achieve its poverty alleviation targets included plans to establish sufficient social protection for all marginalized and vulnerable segments of society. A national framework in this regard has recently cleared the technical advisory committee with the help of the provinces, the minister told the house in his reply.

As part of its initiatives to achieve poverty alleviation-related targets, the government is looking to make economic growth more inclusive and sustained, extend the outreach of social safety nets to an additional five million people (over 16 percent of the population) and reduce the incidence of indirect taxation and broaden the income tax base.

Furthermore, enhanced allocations for the PSDP to improve distribution mechanisms, increasing access to quality services such as an endowment fund for education, better nutrition and the Prime Minister’s Health Insurance Scheme will extend the coverage of health services.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1286608/govt-links-poverty-cut-to-cpec-development>

## PREVALENT FOOD INSECURITY

The Express Tribune, September 28th, 2016.

As it is with education, Pakistan is in a state of emergency with respect to nutrition. On most nutrition indicators, the country ranks worse than parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, there is negligible understanding, consciousness or empathy among the educated elite of the gravest of problems that faces millions of people in this country.

According to the World Food Programme’s country director, Pakistan produces enough food for its entire population and has the largest irrigation system. At the same time, at least 43% of the population is food insecure with 18% facing a severe food shortage that most affects women and children.

Around 15% of children in this country face acute malnourishment, while 43% children face stunted growth, with the highest numbers in Tharparkar district of Sindh, Balochistan and Fata. As things stand, Pakistan will have a generation of stunted children in the next 15 years, only adding to the cycle of poverty.

This country consistently fails on these basic indicators, which are never a priority for any leadership. In a report released last week, Pakistan was ranked 149th among 188 countries in the assessment of countries’ progress towards the UNs’ health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Meanwhile, if consumption patterns in elite neighbourhoods of urban cities are an indication, it seems as if the gap between the rich and the poor is widely growing. The number of eateries keeps increasing, their prices inflating as do the number of beggars on the streets.

There is excessive consumption on the one end and food wastage and extreme poverty on the other. Around 40% of food produced is wasted everyday with most food wastage at weddings and buffets.

Thousands can be gathered in this country for political sloganeering but never to protest for better healthcare, education or against class inequality. Most of this country's problems are blamed on other states, but surely, there are certain things that are within our control too. It is time that the entire leadership and the media gave priority to these haunting problems.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1189573/prevalent-food-insecurity/>

## PAKISTAN'S CASINO ECONOMY: A BLUEPRINT FOR INEQUALITY

Dawn September 29th, 2016

Kaiser Bengali

Pakistan failed to achieve any of the targets set out in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000 to 2015. An analysis of the factors responsible for its abject failure does not bode well for the prospects of any degree of success with respect to the newly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) One of the 17 goals, SDG 10 is focused on achieving income equality globally.

And although, strides have been made to lift people out of poverty, much inequality persists. Hence, SDG 10 focusing on reducing inequalities by 2030 underscores the need for policies 'to achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40pc of the population at a rate higher than the national average' among other targets — all focused on inclusive economic growth.

While the reason for Pakistan's non-performance with the MDGs can be traced to the political economy construct of society, the government has their work cut out if they want to meet the SDGs. There is a tiny upper class with bloated bank balances and a mass of poor with, literally, empty stomachs.

The middle-class is effectively non-existent as a political force. The fact is that there are now two Pakistan's: one of the elite, the ashraafia, and the other of the common people, the awaam. The 'politically-in-control' elite are insensitive to the plight of the ill-fed, ill-housed and ill-educated masses. This has also led to an apartheid-like situation with de facto separate housing, modes of commuting, and education and health facilities. Therefore, inequality is ingrained in the structure of the economy.

The composition of growth is such that it tends to widen inequality: every one rupee expansion in national income places 36 paisas in the pockets of the rich and 3 paisas in the pockets of the poor. The tax regime is regressive, with 80pc of tax revenues derived from indirect taxes, the richest 10pc of the population paying 10pc of their income in indirect taxes, and the poorest 10pc paying 16pc, according to the Social Policy Development Centre's (SPDC) latest annual report.

Resultantly, the income share of the richest 20pc of the population increased by 12pc — from 43.5pc in 1987-88 to 48.7pc in 2010-11. And that of the poorest 20pc has shrunk by 21pc from 8.8pc to 7.0pc over the same period as noted in an SPDC publication.

There have been continuous attempts to pursue high growth as a vehicle for poverty alleviation, but no attempts have been made to address inequality; the sole exception being during 1972 to 1977, whence egalitarianism was pursued as explicit state policy.

The lack of attention to inequality exists despite empirical analysis showing that an increase in GDP by one percentage point reduces poverty by 3.6pc, whereas a one percentage point decrease in inequality reduces poverty by 8.5pc.

Inequality is not a technical variable in economic formulation that can be dealt with by policy alterations at the margin, improving functioning of markets, or 'safety nets' appendages. It is a product of inherited and existing unequal distribution of assets. This inequality is starkly evident in ownership of rural land, with one percent of farms covering one quarter of agricultural land and 62pc of farms comprising five acres or less.

For the country as a whole, 48pc of rural households are landless, with the highest incidence of landlessness at 62pc in Sindh. Other areas of high land ownership concentration are south Punjab and Nasirabad division of Balochistan.

A displaced girl carries her brother during rainfall on the outskirts of Islamabad.—White Star

In urban areas, private sector housing provision has created islands of luxury, while the state's reluctance to provide low and middle-income housing has pushed over half the urban population into shanty towns. The comparative state of housing represents a graphic profile of inequality in this country. At one end, private sector property developers are advertising housing schemes with swimming pools, horse riding tracks and golf courses; and at the other end, there are families of 20 crammed into a 10×10 feet room.

Asset ownership and control represents the 'stock' factor in inequality. State policy represents the 'flow' factor; that is the manner in which the state's social and economic policies generate and distribute income for and between the various income groups. Post-1980s, Pakistan's macroeconomic and fiscal policy framework has moved to a position where it is manifestly anti-commodity producing sectors, particularly manufacturing. It now promotes speculative gains from stock markets, land markets and commodity markets — without generating production of goods, exportable surpluses, or jobs for people at large.

The state's reluctance to provide low and middle-income housing has pushed over half the urban population into shanty towns.—White Star

The new jagirdars of the economy and politics are no longer the traditional landowners and industrialists, but stock market brokers, property developers, and grain and fuel importers and traders. Pakistan is becoming a casino economy, where a wily few siphon off money from the pockets of the unsuspecting populace. This is a recipe for more inequality and more poverty.

Inequality is a global problem, fuelled during the last half century by the neo-liberal economic philosophy. Although the UN has included reduction of inequality as one of the goals, it continues to recommend a line of attack — "improving the regulation and monitoring of financial markets and institutions, encouraging development assistance, and foreign direct investment" — that is rooted in the failed neo-liberal market paradigm.

Markets are not neutral vis-à-vis income groups and regions. They respond to purchasing power, not to need; thereby serving the rich. The distribution of income and wealth is a product of political power configuration between different sections of the population and between different regions. Bridging the structural divide between the Pakistan of the ashraafia and the Pakistan of the awaam is essential to achieving any of the goals of social development.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1286226/pakistans-casino-economy-a-blueprint-for-inequality>

UNDP LAUNCHES SME SUPPORT PROGRAMME IN BALOCHISTAN

Dawn September 29th, 2016

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan and the government of Balochistan launched the Suppliers Development Programme (SDP) here on Wednesday.



The programme aims to improve stability and promote economic development by providing technical assistance and support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in setting up and expanding their businesses.

According to the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and UNDP Pakistan's multidimensional poverty index, 71 per cent of Balochistan's population lives in multidimensional poverty.

The SDP is part of UNDP's larger Balochistan Economic Development Project which aims to boost economic development in the province by creating jobs, increasing SME competitiveness and nurturing young entrepreneurs.

Pakistan is the first South Asian country to replicate the SDP model which is based on the assumption that marginalised groups, like youth and women, can play dynamic roles in building prosperous societies.

UNDP Pakistan Country Director Tracy Vienings said: "SMEs are important employers of marginalised groups such as women and youth. They offer opportunities to people who may otherwise be excluded from the economic mainstream."

She added that from an economic and social perspective, building the capacity of SMEs was imperative for a prosperous future.

According to Ms Vienings, the SDP initiative will generate employment and secure the future of skilled labour and young entrepreneurs in Balochistan. "SDP trains consultants to work with value chains comprising a leading company and six to 10 suppliers," she said.

"They apply a specially designed methodology to improve supplier competitiveness to meet quality and quantity standards, and improved delivery times of products being supplied to lead companies. This low-cost model will eventually be permanently embedded into government and private sector entities," she added.

Joint Chief Economist of the Planning and Development Department, Ikramul Haq, said that addressing "the weaknesses of individual SMEs will increase competitiveness at both the individual and sector level".

The SDP will serve as an excellent tool for developing the private sector and will help reduce poverty and inequality in the long run," he added.

The UNDP's Balochistan chief Zulfiqar Durrani also spoke at the event and highlighted the objectives of the programme.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1286837/undp-launches-sme-support-programme-in-balochistan>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 19 TO SEPTEMBER 25TH 2016

CONFRONTING CHILD MALNUTRITION

The Express Tribune, September 19th, 2016.

Despite the burgeoning of hundreds of new restaurants, large grocery stores, and the introduction of various types of food dishes from across other continents, Pakistan struggles with starvation and malnutrition. In fact, Pakistan has some of the worst rates in the world.

According to Unicef's data, Pakistan's stunting rate is in the moderate to severe category, at 45 per cent. This means that nearly half of all children in our country experience stunted growth. In order to combat the phenomenon, an NGO, once again, has come in to rescue our future generations from the condition.

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) will be introducing a food fortification programme in order to raise food nutrition standards, particularly in staple foods such as wheat, cereals, and oils. The project will be

executed in conjunction with 1,000 mills and 100 oil producers across the country. Indeed, this logical step in the right direction is a welcome development, and one that is crucial to target child malnutrition.

Some 32 per cent of children in the country are underweight and this is quite a point to consider in the backdrop of the recently concluded EidulAzha where thousands of kilogrammes of meat were distributed among the poor. Of course, one annual occasion to try and balance out the food availability gap for the poor is highly inefficient to even put a dent in the high rates of child malnutrition.

While the intention to feed the poor by ordinary citizens might be there, the will of the government leadership is nowhere to be found. It seems the government's only goal is to invite more financial aid into the country with a primary focus on the economy.

However, it fails to realise that the overall health of the country's population is an important factor when it comes to economic growth wherein children who have healthy physical and cognitive development will be able to participate in the growth of the economy as adults. Hopefully, the DFID's programme will enable our leadership to acknowledge that.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1183832/confronting-child-malnutrition/>

## ENDING POVERTY: A REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE?

Dawn, 21 September, 2016

Haris Gazdar

The first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is dramatic in its objective to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere” by 2030. The question is whether this goal is even a logical possibility, given the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – though narrower in scope – sought to do the same and were said to be the ‘most successful anti-poverty movement in history’.

And have learned economic philosophers not pondered over the relative nature of poverty – that no matter how well off everyone is, some will be poorer, and poverty is about those who are poorer.

Perhaps because wanting to end poverty is so fantastic, it has been helpfully broken down into more tractable targets: ensure that no one lives on less than US\$1.25 a day. This idea owes its origins to a debate about global poverty lines – or levels of income below which a person is considered to be poor.

And if the \$1.25 a day target seems too rigid, then there is the more achievable goal to “reduce by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.” This gives quite a bit of leeway to national governments to come up with their own definitions of poverty reduction and then implement methods to achieve such objectives.

Furthermore, deserving attention are the other less easily verifiable sub-goals relating to the process of ending poverty: implementing social protection systems for all, ensuring equal rights to economic resources and building the resilience of the poor to climate change events. Most governments can say that they are already moving in this direction.

In the case of Pakistan, the state can point to the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) as its social protection system, claim that its Constitution guarantees equal rights to economic resources, and wait for the next climate change event to happen before doing much about building resilience while it launches an appeal for funds.

The point being, that while SDG 1 may outline targets with the ambitious objective of ending poverty, it concludes realistically with a whimper about conditions, such as the mobilisation of resources and building sound policy frameworks – many of which are virtually impossible to monitor.

The belief that the government tries to mobilise resources and works on sound policy frameworks is widespread, but actionable evidence to this effect is nonexistent.

During the MDGs, the number of people living in extreme poverty increased in 30 countries. The goal to end poverty is, therefore, a mixed bag of the virtually unachievable and the already done. The research group, Development Initiatives has noted that the goal of ending poverty by 2030 will prove more challenging than halving poverty globally.

It has warned that where poverty is the deepest, governments lack revenue needed to turn the SDGs into a reality. Then, why does the UN system produce such unachievable goals, and why do governments sign up to them? Once the UN system had adopted the MDGs with such fanfare, as a showcase of a global social contract, it really had to come up with a follow-up act.

Cynical as it sounds, if poverty reduction in Pakistan is the goal, much good might be extracted from this box of magic tricks. Since the government has signed up to SDG 1, they can be asked to adopt the equivalent of US\$1.25 per person a day as an official poverty line.

This can put an end to the paralysing debate about the new poverty line – a debate that has raged since 2001 when the last line was set. The SDGs can also be used to push for a quick consensus on ways of measuring “poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions”. To add, there is a solid argument for mainstreaming these indicators into national policies and plans since the government has signed up to the SDGs.

There is also much that can be done with process-related goals in SDG 1. Any weakening of political commitment to the BISP (or a large scale cash transfer programme) can now be confronted with the argument that the government has willingly signed up to expand, not reduce, social protection.

The commitment to equal rights to economic resources provides the basis for the most sophisticated demand-making on the part of those who argue for a more political understanding of poverty reduction.

How do you ensure equal rights to economic resources in a highly unequal society where the economic system is based on private property rights, and where publicly-owned economic resources are mostly doled out to various elites? By highlighting and talking about these very contradictions.

Yes, signing up to equal rights to economic resources creates the possibility of arguing once again for land reforms, despite what the courts have said about them. It also opens the window to demand the repeal of discriminatory laws and legal practices which exist despite our Constitution – laws such as the Punjab Land Alienation Act and practices such as benami holdings.

The former divides the rural society of the largest province into higher status agricultural tribes and lower status non-agricultural tribes whose economic rights are circumscribed. The latter (benami) is often used to limit women’s rights to property.

These are examples of laws and conventions across Pakistan in favour of incumbent property owners over non-propertied classes. Then, there is the potentially explosive but possibly negotiable issue of rights to natural resources – most happen to be located in the poorest and most politically alienated regions of the country.

The SDGs were borne out of politics and their best use in countries such as Pakistan is political – to create the space for legal, political and policy changes that will lead to poverty reduction. The dramatic promise of SDG 1 can quite easily fade into a whimper, but it also gives the committed campaigner a peg for asking difficult questions. Make of it what you will.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1284960>

## DAR REVIEWS PERFORMANCE OF PAKISTAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION FUND

Business Recorder, 21st, September, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting on Tuesday to review the performance of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF). CEO PPAF, Qazi Azmat Isa briefed the Finance Minister on the progress of the Prime Minister's Interest Free Loan Scheme under the banner of PPAF.

The meeting was informed that with an allocation of Rs 3.5 billion, the scheme had reached a total of 207,720 borrowers by end of August 2016. Those included 127,697 (61pc) women and 80,023 (39pc) males. Up to Rs 50, 000 are given to each borrower under the scheme and this amount has a 99 percent recovery rate. With 26 partner organizations, PPAF is presently disbursing the interest free loans in 44 districts and 287 Union Councils. The total amount disbursed to the borrowers till the end of August 2016 has reached Rs 4.518 billion through 233 loan centers.

The target areas for the loans are areas with low socio-economic indicators, high food insecurity and low or no coverage by conventional micro-finance. The Prime Minister's Interest Free Loan scheme not only provides loans to the consumers but also gives them business advisory services. A consumer graduates from dependency to sufficiency and then his/her links are established with microfinance institutions and markets. It is an all encompassing scheme where people are dealt with respect and guidance is provided on each step and a social change automatically comes into effect.

The Finance Minister appreciated the work so far done by the PPAF to further the PM's Interest Free Loan Scheme. He appreciated that the scheme was presently covering 61 percent females. "The success of the scheme speaks volumes about the hard work and commitment by the government for the people of the country. He added that the scheme would bring a quality difference in the lives of the people.

The Minister assured the PPAF of support in its efforts to make the scheme more effective. Senior officials of the Economic Affairs Division and Ministry of Finance participated in the meeting.—PR

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/09/21/21-page/795992-news.html>

## SEVEN MORE THARI CHILDREN DIE AMID HEALTH WORKERS PROTEST

Dawn, 22nd, September, 2016

MITHI: Seven more children died of complications caused by malnutrition during past two days at Mithi and Nagarparkar government hospitals, which were hit by weeks long protest by health workers over non-payment of salary for 14 months.

Newborns Altaf Hussain, Jalil, Sarwan, Zulfikar, Waseem Ahmed, Mohen Lal and Prem died as unpaid health workers continued their protest on Wednesday.

The protesters took out a rally from Mithi Civil Hospital after boycotting work and marched to Thar Press Club where they staged a sit-in and demonstration.

The protesters' leaders urged the chief minister to release funds for the payment of salary to 598 health workers. One of their colleagues, Bacho Meghwar, committed suicide on Aug 19 out of extreme disappointment as he had nothing to feed his family.

DHO Dr Chandar Lal claimed the 598 unpaid workers were performing duties and no health unit or dispensary had been closed as was being complained by area people and media.

Sources in Mithi civil hospital said that doctors were forcing parents of ailing kids to shift to other hospitals to avoid the burden of blame. Since children were already brought in serious condition after covering long distances they could hardly survive a journey in government hospitals' ambulances, which lacked oxygen cylinders and other necessary equipment, they said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285259>

## FACTORY CLOSURES: OVER 0.5M JOBS LOST IN TWO YEARS

Business Recorder, 22nd, September, 2016

ZAHEER ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: More than half a million jobs have been lost in the country in two years due to factory closures, a global news agency reported.

Exporters are said to have claimed that buyers have shifted to Bangladesh and Vietnam because the ongoing energy crisis made it impossible for them to meet deadline of orders as well as the fact that foreign buyers are less comfortable visiting Pakistan in spite of the fact that there has been visible improvement in security situation. Exporters also complain that the government has neither provided them any support nor planned how the textile industry should move ahead, according to this wire service of high repute. The report further stated that despite a pick up in economic growth after the government submitted to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme in 2013 to avert a balance of payment crisis, Pakistan's exports have fallen owing to a slowdown in global demand and energy shortage. Pakistan exports have fallen to \$21 billion in June 2016, at the lowest level since 2010, according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Pakistan can face a serious balance of payment crisis and pressure on currency if oil prices go up and exports failed to increase. The report while quoting Acting Secretary General of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) Saleem Saleh added that around 100 factories have closed and at least 500,000 people have lost their jobs in the past two years; and about a two-thirds of the members of the Pakistan Bedwear Exporters Association have stopped working in the past five years, stated head of the association Shabir Ahmed.

Most of the small and mid-sized factories are closing because they are unable to bear the extra cost of prolonged power outages. However, larger factories have invested in their own power, including diesel generators, to cope with the nation's electricity deficit of about 3,000 megawatts.

According to the report, the IMF has also been pointing to a number of causes, including the local currency which it said was overvalued by as much as 20 percent. For buyers, Pakistan's competitors are also more alluring due to the country's tarnished security image after years of insurgency, bombings and violence.

Pakistan has already announced in June that zero-rated sales tax regime for five export industries, including textiles. Borrowing has become more attractive with the discount rate at it's the lowest in more than four decades.

Governor State Bank of Pakistan has emphasized the need to diversify products and export markets away from those on a declining trend. However, he expects improved electricity and gas supplies this year to stem some of the drop in exports, stated the wire service.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/09/22/1-page/796036-news.html>

## MILLIONS EMBEZZLED IN PM'S LOAN SCHEME

The Express Tribune, 22nd, September, 2016

Shahbaz Rana

ISLAMABAD: The staff of the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) has siphoned off millions of rupees of Prime Minister's Youth Business Loan Scheme by opening bogus accounts, reveals an official investigation.

It is the first of its kind fraud in the government's flagship loan programme unearthed in the Mardan region of NBP.

An officer of the state-owned bank is found to be involved in the fraud who, with the help of his brother, withdrew money from the accounts of beneficiaries of the loan scheme, according to an initial investigation report available with The Express Tribune.

Shah Nawaz Khan, Area Credit Manager of NBP, was running a 'parallel bank' and withdrawing money without authorisation from the bank accounts, said the report.

NBP Mardan Region Head Naemullah Jan confirmed that Khan was running a parallel bank and he had been suspended. However, he refused to further comment on the matter.

Investigators have recommended that the Central Unit of Fraud/Forgery (CUFF) of NBP should carry out a comprehensive probe to ascertain the exact quantum of losses. Sources said so far Rs8 million worth of fraud had been detected.

On August 4, the NBP regional head had authorised the investigation and the probe report was sent to him on August 15, four days before Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited the NBP headquarters in Karachi for a briefing on the loan scheme.

The premier launched the scheme in December 2013 with an aim to provide loans of up to Rs2 million to the applicants and requiring a total of Rs100-200 billion. A Prime Minister's Office press release of August 19 stated that the premier was unhappy with the way NBP was implementing the scheme, designed to provide sources of livelihood to the youth.

NBP Executive Vice President and head of policy, procedures and system development of the loan scheme Zubair Mirza did not respond to the request for comments despite repeated attempts.

The investigators randomly selected 18 cases of the loan scheme and "found grave irregularities in all the cases," according to the investigation report. They found instances of parallel banking in all these cases. Over Rs20 million was disbursed from the 18 accounts.

Furthermore, "large-scale pocketing was also observed through unauthorised debt and credit to the PM youth loan scheme bank accounts."

"Most of the entries have been routed through A/C No 4045242751 titled Spinkai Builders and the signatory authority of the account is Asif Nawaz Khan, who is reportedly the real brother of the main accused Shah Nawaz Khan," revealed the report.

Of the 18 cases, two were found to be "totally bogus, ghost and both the borrowers have completely disowned the accounts".

Taimoor Ali Shah and Murad Ali said they never opened the two accounts in the NBP main branch Mardan, nor received their cheque books, it added. The investigators found that Rs1.53 million was withdrawn from the Taimoor Ali Shah account and Rs1.575 million from the Murad Ali account.

The investigators noted that there was likelihood of such instances in other cases as well and recommended a detailed investigation by CUFF.

In another case, Rs150,000 was withdrawn from an account and given to Qamar Zaman, which was subsequently transferred to the account of Spinkai Builders.

In a separate case, Rs1.566 million was sanctioned to Muhammad Yasir without securing 10% equity. In the case of three accounts, involving Rs2.84 million, the debit and credit vouchers were missing.

In yet another case, it was found that a beneficiary's money was given to Spinkai Builders. In this case, Rs80,000 was withdrawn from the account of Muhammad Inam and given to Spinkai Builders.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1186165/millions-embezzled-pms-loan-scheme/>

## THE BEST NEWS YOU DON'T KNOW

The Express Tribune, 23rd, September, 2016

Nicholas Kristof

The world is a mess, with billions of people locked in inescapable cycles of war, famine and poverty, with more children than ever perishing from hunger, disease and violence.

That's about the only thing Americans agree on; we're polarized about all else. But several polls have found that about 9 out of 10 Americans believe that global poverty has worsened or stayed the same over the last 20 years.

Fortunately, the one point Americans agree on is dead wrong.

As world leaders gather for the United Nations General Assembly this week, all the evidence suggests that we are at an inflection point for the ages. The number of people living in extreme poverty (\$1.90 per person per day) has tumbled by half in two decades, and the number of small children dying has dropped by a similar proportion — that's six million lives a year saved by vaccines, breast-feeding promotion, pneumonia medicine and diarrhea treatments!

Historians may conclude that the most important thing going on in the world in the early 21st century was a stunning decline in human suffering.

O.K., you're thinking that I've finally cracked up after spending too much time in desperate places. So a few data points:

- As recently as 1981, when I was finishing college, 44 percent of the world's population lived in extreme poverty, according to the World Bank. Now the share is believed to be less than 10 percent and falling. "This is the best story in the world today," says Jim Yong Kim, the president of the World Bank.
- For the entire history of the human species until the 1960s, a majority of adults were illiterate. Now 85 percent of adults worldwide are literate and the share is rising.
- Although inequality has risen in America, the global trend is more encouraging: Internationally, inequality is on the decline because of gains by the poor in places like China and India.

The U.N. aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, and experts believe it is possible to get quite close. In short, on our watch, we have a decent chance of virtually wiping out ills that have plagued humanity for thousands of generations, from illiteracy to the most devastating kind of hand-to-mouth poverty.

Yet the public thinks the opposite, that poverty is getting worse. A poll to be released Thursday by Motivaction, a Dutch firm, finds that only 1 percent of Americans surveyed realized that global extreme poverty had fallen by half over 20 years.

I wonder if those of us in journalism and the humanitarian worlds don't err by focusing so much on human misery that we leave the public with the misperception that everything is always getting worse.

I've covered massacres in South Sudan, concentration camps in Myanmar and widespread stunting in India, but it's also important to acknowledge the backdrop of global progress. Otherwise, the public may perceive poverty as hopeless and see no point in carrying on the fight — at just the point when we're making the most rapid gains ever recorded.

When I first made the acquaintance of the developing world, as a backpacking law student in the 1980s, sometimes riding on tops of trains or buses and writing articles to pay my expenses, the most gut-wrenching aspect of poverty I encountered was ubiquitous blind beggars, robbed of dignity and any chance to be productive.

This is much less common today, partly because humanitarian aid — despite real shortcomings — has made a profound difference in health. The heroic work of former President Jimmy Carter and pharmaceutical donations from Merck have made river blindness less common. Vitamin A capsules costing 2 cents a dose have reduced blindness as well. Antibiotics have helped curb blinding trachoma. And a simple \$25 surgery developed by a Nepali ophthalmologist, Dr. Sanduk Ruit, lets people suffering from cataracts see again.

The scenes of blind beggars on every street corner will soon be gone forever.

Cynics scoff that if more children's lives are saved, they will just grow up to have more babies and cause new famines and cycles of poverty. Not so! In fact, when parents are assured that their children will survive, they choose to have fewer of them. As girls are educated and contraception becomes available, birthrates tumble — just as they did in the West. Indian women now average just 2.4 births, Indonesian women 2.5, and Mexican women just 2.2.

So in a moment we can return to urgent needs worldwide, from war to climate change to refugees. But first, let's pause for a nanosecond of silence to acknowledge the greatest gains in human well-being in the history of our species — not to inspire complacency, but rather to spur our efforts to accelerate what may be the most important trend in the world today.

[www.nytimes.com/2016/09/22/opinion/the-best-news-you-dont-know.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/22/opinion/the-best-news-you-dont-know.html)

## WHEN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IS LINKED TO DEVOLUTION

Dawn, September 25th, 2016

Nargis Sethi

The recent hullabaloo to play out on our television screens focused on garbage dumps and waste disposal in Karachi, incidentally Pakistan's most populous city and seventh largest urban centre worldwide. Sanitation is a challenge in Karachi as is solid waste management. If nothing else, for policymakers this should highlight that managing their affairs through centralised governance at both federal and provincial levels will not improve the quality of life of an average citizen.

Orders in this particular case were issued by the previous head of the provincial government and subsequently by newly inducted Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah that the city be cleaned and waste disposed of immediately. Even the threat of heads rolling changed nothing.

However, the rapid increase in urbanisation in Pakistan, projected to equal the rural population by 2030, poses serious challenges to the already over-burdened basic amenities, including water and sanitation. When viewed in the context of human development, Pakistan's dismal performance vis-à-vis the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is reason enough for rethinking the strategy needed to implement them.

Therefore, participating states — Pakistan included — that are signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have agreed between now and 2030 to end poverty, leading to sustained economic growth and shared prosperity; thereby enabling inclusive and peaceful societies.

Goal 6 of the development agenda talks about ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation; eight specific targets have been formulated to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for all, to end open defecation, with special attention given to the needs of



women and girls, as well as to improve the quality of water by reducing pollution and minimising the release of waste and chemicals, etc.

Efforts are needed to ensure water efficiency across all sectors and to reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity through the participation of local communities.

In October 2015, the Planning Commission of Pakistan and the United Nations Development Programme signed a Memorandum of Understanding to launch the SDGs and to establish SDG centres to regularly review progress, at the federal level as well as in the four provinces. In July this year, the Ministry of Climate Change collaborated with Unicef to host a national consultation workshop to track the implementation of Goal 6 related targets.

While these efforts are commendable, past experience does not bode well for likely success as ground realities are very harsh. When people are dying on a daily basis from drinking contaminated water and, in many cases, there is a total absence of water in their areas, this demonstrates inadequate municipal water supply and sanitation leading to deteriorating health standards. With urban water demand — and industrial demand — increasing by 95pc between 2001 and 2025 because of increases in population, falling water flows and erosion in storage capacities, much work needs to be done.

Effective implementation of the SDGs is undoubtedly linked to devolution, right down to the district level leveraging the newly established local governments. How can we expect those sitting far away and dependent on mineral water for their good health to formulate policies providing clean and safe tap water fit for everyday consumption? Policymakers at both federal and provincial levels are reluctant to allow those at the grassroots formulate policies relating to water and sanitation.

Sanitation is altogether absent in cities with people using the sides of the roads and green spaces as toilets a common sight, with hardly any toilet facilities available for men and far fewer for women. The most important take-away from this development agenda is that all goals and targets are integrated and not divisible, thus a lack of progress on any goal (Goal 6, for example) can have repercussions on those related to health, education, climate change, etc.

Provincial governments must be held accountable to ensure that all Pakistanis have access to clean drinking water by 2030. One way to track progress at the highest level without intruding into the domain of provincial governments is for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to convene a meeting of the Council of Common Interests on a quarterly basis with a permanent first agenda item being the evaluation of the progress each province has achieved on SDGs.

Doing this will also reflect the commitment made by the prime minister last year when he spoke at the UN General Assembly that the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 complements the government's Vision 2025. On Jan 1, 2017, it will be a year since the launch of the SDGs and the government can mark the occasion by guaranteeing that by then local governments are in place in all four provinces, enabling them to make a modest but significant contribution in transforming our world. More importantly, such a move will also be a vote of confidence by political parties in a genuinely democratic polity.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285964/when-human-development-is-linked-to-devolution>

#### **BISP, AKU CONSIDER COLLABORATION FOR NEONATAL HEALTH**

The News, September 25th, 2016

Agha Khan University has appreciated efforts of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and expressed its willingness to work with the programme for running a successful Waseela-e-Sehat scheme for its beneficiaries.

This was stated by Professor Dr Rozina Karmaliani, project director who was leading the Agha Khan University Foundation Delegation, during a visit to the BISP Sindh Regional Office here on Friday. Professor Dr Rozina Karmaliani was accompanied by Imran, director, and other Agha Khan University Project representatives.

During the meeting, Professor Dr Rozina said that poor planning regarding the development of the social sector had led to food insecurity, health and malnutrition in Pakistan. She said that the AKU intended to work for neonatal health-related activities for BISP beneficiaries all over Sindh, said a statement issued by the BISP's media wing.

Initially, they intend to start from Thatta District where BISP beneficiaries should come to basic health units (BHUs) for nurturing, health facilities to fight malnutrition. AKU Foundation screens children and creates awareness among parents regarding the benefits of improved nutrition and neonatal health.

The BISP Sindh and the AKU will jointly assist children, pregnant and lactating women suffering from malnutrition to prevent stunting and micronutrient deficiencies. To determine the prevalence of anxiety and depression and evaluate associated factors, including domestic violence, among pregnant women in an urban community in Pakistan.

The project will be initiated by the AKU Foundation in collaboration with BISP and would help prevent stunting (chronic malnutrition), primarily focusing at children, pregnant and lactating women in the Thatta district of Sindh.

Director General BISP Sindh Naeem Anwar briefed the delegation about the functions and operations of the BISP and more specifically on E-commerce, Waseela-e-sehat and Waseela-e-taleem challenges they were facing in enrolling the beneficiaries and how the BISP beneficiary women were being served at the tehsil level.

The DG BISP appreciated the work plan of the AKU Foundation and ensured it full cooperation and data- sharing of BISP beneficiaries with field offices.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/152414-BISP-AKU-consider-collaboration-for-neonatal-health>

43% PAKISTANIS REMAIN 'FOOD INSECURE'

The Express Tribune, September 25th, 2016

Peer Muhammad

ISLAMABAD: Despite having surplus food to feed its population, 43% of the country's citizens remain food insecure with 18% facing a severe shortage, said World Food Program (WFP) Country Director Lola Castro in an exclusive interview with The Express Tribune.

Castro is concluding her three-year term and declared Pakistan a food-sufficient country with largest irrigation system, but also a place that remained incapable of serving its large population.

Around 15% of the population under the age of five is acutely malnourished. Close to 43% children (around 10 million) face stunted growth and are chronically malnourished, said Castro, adding that most of them are in FATA, Balochistan and Tharparkar.

"The problem is not food production, but poverty and illiteracy that bar people from access to food with required calories and nutrition," said Castro. "Children and women are the most vulnerable as far as food insecurity is concerned.

"In cases where they do get food, it is nowhere near the required level of calories and nutrition, especially for mothers and growing children.

"Close to 18% of the country's population gets less than 1,700 calories per day, making them severely food insecure. The requirement for a healthy individual is at least 2,350 calories per day."

Suggesting solutions, Castro said that the vulnerable population needed subsidised food and support through different programmes including the Benazir Income Support Programme, which presently covers around 5 million people.

"There is a need for further expansion of such programmes."

Castro added that Pakistan needed to diversify its produce and add variety to its crops.

“Apart from the areas mentioned, internally displaced people remain vulnerable to food insecurity and WFP, with the government of Pakistan, has successfully launched many initiatives including the Zero Hunger Program to support them. Under these programs, initially, 327,104 families were supported but the figure has now reduced to 119,369 after many displaced families returned to their homes.

Castro said that Pakistan needed to undertake wheat and oil fortification besides salt iodisation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1187846/despite-surplus-43-pakistanis-remain-food-insecure/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 11TH TO SEPTEMBER 18TH 2016

SHORTCOMINGS HIGHLIGHTED: EOBI ON VERGE OF COLLAPSE, NEEDS RESTRUCTURING, SAYS REPORT

The Express Tribune, September 12th, 2016.

Sehrish Wasif

Islamabad: The Employees' Old-age Benefits Institution (EOBI) is on the verge of collapse and it should be restructured on an urgent basis before the situation worsens beyond recovery.

This was revealed in a report titled 'Working of Employees Old-age Benefits Institution (EOBI) and its Recommendations to Re-structure it for Excellence in its Services for 6.5 million workforce', compiled by the Federal Ombudsman's Secretariat.

The EOBI currently lacks accurate data as of the 6.5 million registered insured persons, data for only 2.9 million could be matched.

The Secretariat had received 1,011 complaints from its various regions regarding registration under the Act, insurable employment, old-age pensions and grants and survivors' pensions among others.

Considering the seriousness of the issue, a committee was constituted by the Federal Ombudsman's Secretariat under the chairmanship of Malik Asif Hayat, the former secretary to the President and former Chairman Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC).

The report paints a gloomy picture of EOBI and highlights a number of shortcomings.

The report suggests that EOBI's computer system needs to be upgraded. Furthermore, a system should be developed to maintain and update records of different establishments.

Highlighting EOBI's weak investment team, the report stated that this was the main reason why it was not able to derive maximum investment advantage from available opportunities.

According to the actuarial report, pension funds would start depleting from 2021 and be wiped out by 2027, warns the report. It also cited heavy investments in government securities as a major factor depleting EOBI's funds.

The report called for increasing the employers' contribution as according to law, the government contributed to guarantee the minimum pension.

The report stated that the number of registered employers was 105,976, out of which 72,404 are 'active', 29,685 are 'closed' while 3,887 have been de-registered.

Meanwhile, total labour force in domestic commercial and industrial sectors was 12.5 million, out of which the number of insured persons in EOBI was only 6.5 million. However, the number of active pensioners was just 540,000, barely 50 percent of the total.

“This figure appears (more) dismal when seen in the context of a country having a population approximately to 200 million ... The management of the institution (needs) to accelerate the pace of registration of industries and establishments,” states the report.

“The most significant issue for the government to take up is the resolution of the issues that have cropped up after the 18th Amendment. Crucial matters need to be taken up in the Council of Common Interest (CCI) on urgent basis,” stated Federal Ombudsman Salman Farooqi in the report.

It recommends that for better returns to investors, it is important to design assets allocation strategy for a 10-year cycle with assets classes of fixed income, equity, real estate with percentage allocation within framework of investment rules.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1180888/shortcomings-highlighted-eobi-verge-collapse-needs-restructuring-says-report/>

## PAKISTAN'S GDP EXPANSION FAILS TO CREATE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The Express Tribune, September 12th, 2016

Dr Fahd Rehman

LAHORE: Much has been touted about real gross domestic product (GDP) growth without considering joblessness in the economy.

Although the real GDP has been growing, yet the output expansion is not providing gainful employment to the aspiring youth in the economy. This phenomenon is known as jobless growth.

Despite increase in the size of economy, joblessness acts as a binding constraint. There are certain factors associated with it.

Despite persistent current account deficit, the focus of the government is on short-term capital inflows in the form of bilateral, multilateral and commercial borrowing. As a result, the foreign exchange reserves have increased from \$18.7 billion to \$23 billion in the last fiscal year, while the foreign debt increased from \$54.6 billion to \$61.4 billion during this period.

This implies that the rush to growth and enhanced foreign exchange reserves has been financed by external debt.

The economic policy-making is centred on the sensitivity and sentiment of financial markets. It revolves around corporate-led growth model since the early 1990s and efforts have been made to create an environment conducive to private-sector investment.

Although the corporate sector does grow to some extent, yet the ever increasing informality in the economy is acting as a drag on this sector. The growth of informal sector is also creating ‘congestion’ in urban and semi-urban areas of Pakistan.

The simplest example of this congestion is traffic congestion which gives rise to late arrival of men and material. The other form of congestion could be frequent disruption in electricity, gas and water supplies, which act as inputs for businesses and distort the timely delivery schedule.

The congestion resulting from growing informality lowers the productivity of corporate sector. The lower productivity cannot create gainful employment for the educated youth, meaning that level of corporate employment has been on the decline.

That is the reason aspiring MBAs even from decent business schools are not getting desired job opportunities. In other words, the situation has created an oversupply of business graduates. The ultimate refuge for these graduates is the informal sector.

Our multi-party democratic politics has become competitive with the passage of time. The focus of political parties is on short-term electoral gains. The lingering fear of losing the election battle is a deciding factor in the choice and selection of projects.

Most of the conceived projects are with frontloaded returns in the democratic politics. On this basis, thermal power plants on furnace oil were conceived and implemented in the early 1990s. Initially, the projects ran successfully owing to lower crude oil prices. To what extent, these power plants provide affordable electricity is in front of us.

Fast forward, by following the same logic, thermal power plants on coal are being conceived and implemented in order to quickly fix the long-run structural problem.

The energy mix is heavily tilted to thermal means which may contribute to balance of payments crisis owing to higher import content at frequent intervals.

Due to the long-term nature of hydroelectric power projects, less attention has been paid to these projects in the democratic politics as they entail frontloaded costs and backend returns.

Similarly, visible taxi and tractor schemes, flamboyant motorways and expressways, ostentatious metros and trains, circuitous flyovers and underpasses have gathered the attention of political parties.

In a nutshell, all these modern infrastructure projects without integrated planning would generate huge economic, political and social cost in the long run.

All parties are trying to gain the maximum mileage out of a political term to appease the masses. Regardless of the structural problems, the parties focus on short-term gains at the expense of long-term losses. Therefore, the spectre of jobless growth would keep on haunting the democratic politics in years to come.

The writer is the Assistant Professor of Economics at Suleman Dawood School of Business, Lahore University of Management Sciences

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1180696/jobless-growth-gdp-expansion-fails-create-youth-employment/>

## PUNJAB RECEIVES 75PC OF YOUTH BUSINESS LOANS

Dawn, September 16th, 2016

Shahid Iqbal

KARACHI: The National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) continues to almost exclusively support the Prime Minister's Youth Business Loan (PMYBL) scheme, as 17 other banks collectively contributed hardly four per cent to overall lending under the scheme launched in 2013.

The prime minister recently expressed his dismay at the management of the PMYBL scheme and directed NBP to improve its performance.

A report issued by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Thursday showed 75pc loans were disbursed in Punjab, which is the stronghold of the ruling party.

“As of June 30, 2016, total disbursements by banks were to the tune of Rs8.14 billion, out of which Rs7.77bn were disbursed by NBP,” said the SBP report.

NBP has so far disbursed 96pc of total loans while the remaining 17 banks disbursed 4pc.

The report said that out of the cumulative number of received applications by the end of June, 75pc were from Punjab, 9pc from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh each, around 2pc from Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Islamabad and Balochistan each and 1pc from Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

Out of the total 71,644 complete applications received by banks, 86pc belonged to male applicants, the SBP report said.

The maximum share of female applicants was in the Islamabad region (23pc) while the lowest was in Balochistan (8pc).

The share of female applicants was 14pc in Punjab, 13pc in KP, 13pc in Sindh, 16pc in GB and 1pc in AJK.

During the April-June quarter, fresh disbursements amounted to Rs716 million, recording growth of 10pc over the preceding quarter.

Under the PMYBL scheme, loans up to Rs2m are being provided through the banking system at service charges of 6pc per annum to unemployed youth for establishing or extending business enterprises. The rate of return for banks working as executing agencies is the one-year Karachi Inter-Bank Offer Rate (Kibor) plus 500 basis points, or 5pc, with Kibor to be reset every year.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283985/punjab-receives-75pc-of-youth-business-loans>

‘TEVTA PAYING SPECIAL ATTENTION TO UNSKILLED FEMALE YOUTH’

Business Recorder, September 16, 2016

Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) is paying special attention to impart training to unemployed female youth of Punjab and in this regard, women are being trained in different skills. Chairperson Tevta Irfan Qaiser Sheikh said this while addressing a meeting, to review the progress regarding launching of courses for female.

“Our female should avail this opportunity to get admission in employable trades so that they may contribute for the economic growth of country because our national development cannot be attained without the availability and continuous supply of trained manpower.” In developed countries, women are contributing alongside men for the development of their country, he said.

Irfan said that Tevta has introduced employable trades for our female youth including beautician, machine embroidery, fabric printing, AutoCad, confectionery & bakery, industrial stitching, professional cooking, web designing, home appliances, fashion designing, domestic tailoring and other courses.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/85203/>

MALNUTRITION CONTINUES TO TAKE TOLL ON THARI BABIES

Dawn September 18th, 2016

MITHI: Seven more children died due to complications caused by malnutrition at the Mithi civil hospital during past three days, raising the death toll since Jan 1 this year to 335, said health officials. But according to unofficial figures, the toll has risen to 470 in eight months.

The officials at DHO office said on Saturday that more than 80,000 kids suffering from various diseases were brought to six facilities of the district and of them 335 died and 583 were referred to Karachi and Hyderabad hospitals for further treatment.

“We don’t have any record on the ailing children referred to the teaching hospitals and cannot confirm whether they survived or died,” admitted DHO Dr Chandar Lal.

Meanwhile, 589 health workers, including nurses, dispensers, vaccinators, who have not received salary for the past 14 months, has stopped work in protest, virtually shutting down the health units in remote villages.

The chief executive officer of the Health and Nutrition Development Society (Hands), Dr Tanweer Ahmed, has once again raised the demand that healthcare facilities in Thar should be handed over to his organisation or the Indus Hospital on the pattern of Badin civil hospital, which had been handed over to Indus Hospital.

Dr Shaikh observed that malnutrition was a serious problem, which could only be resolved through sincere efforts of the government and active role of NGOs working in the region. Recent showers would bring some relief to the drought-hit Tharis, he added.

[www.dawn.com/news/1284359/malnutrition-continues-to-take-toll-on-thari-babies](http://www.dawn.com/news/1284359/malnutrition-continues-to-take-toll-on-thari-babies)

WORLD BANK SAYS BISP’S PROGRESS ‘HIGHLY SATISFACTORY’

The Express Tribune, September 18th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank has lauded the progress made by the Benazir Income Support Programme in achieving its goals.

In a letter issued on Saturday, the World Bank pointed out that the BISP had not only achieved all its targets but had also exceeded some.

According to the report, all 19 Disbursement Link Indicators (DLIs) have been successfully achieved and remaining funds against the last achieved DLI would be disbursed in the current month, a press release issued stated.

Acknowledging BISP as Pakistan’s flagship Social Safety Net Programme, the mission upgraded the progress towards achieving the development objective as ‘highly satisfactory’ while the rating of the project management has been upgraded to ‘satisfactory’.

Since its inception the programme has emerged as one of the best social safety nets in the world catering to the 5.3 million poor families all across Pakistan. The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) is also part of the mission.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1183541/exceeding-targets-world-bank-says-bisps-progress-highly-satisfactory/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 5TH TO SEPTEMBER 10TH 2016

‘REMOVING MALNUTRITION IN WOMEN, CHILDREN PRIORITY IN BALOCHISTAN’

Dawn, September 6th, 2016

Business Recorder, Sep 06, 2016

QUETTA: Balochistan Health Minister Saleh Baloch has said that doing away with malnutrition, especially among women and children, is the priority of the government.

“Micronutrient deficiencies and their impact on health is a serious concern for political leadership,” he said while speaking at a seminar on ‘Balochistan wheat fortification legislation’ here on Monday

Emphasising the role of the private sector in solving the problem at the event organised by the Balochistan Nutrition Programme for Mothers and Children (BNPMC), he said that adequate legislation would be done to fortify wheat flour with iron, folic acid and vitamins.

Dr Ruqiya Hashmi, chairperson of the Provincial Standing Committee on Population and Health, supporting legislation for wheat fortification said that food fortification was the easiest and a cost-effective means to addressing malnutrition, particularly iron deficiency among women and children.

BNPMC programme director Dr Fahim Khan said that malnutrition indicators presented a horrific picture.

A survey on mother-child health conducted jointly by the health department and the Aga Khan University showed that 16 per cent of the children faced serious nutrition problem with 40pc falling in low weight category and 52pc were smaller in height as compared to their ages.

He said that 54.9pc women and 73.5pc children suffered from vitamin A deficiency and 48.9pc women and 56.8 children faced iron deficiency in the province.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1282338>

### BISP INTRODUCES BIOMETRIC SYSTEM FOR BENEFICIARIES

Business Recorder, September 09, 2016

The BISP management has introduced the biometric system in releasing the financial assistance to beneficiaries in transparent manner and in this the beneficiaries of Mirpurkhas Division would receive quarterly instalments of the amount in the month of September 2016 through the newly introduced system.

According to announcement here on Thursday, the beneficiaries of Mirpurkhas Division could receive quarterly instalments of the month of September 2016 at their nearest “Easy Paisa” Centres or “Omoney” Shops instead to get the amount from the bank or post office. In case of any inconvenience, the beneficiaries can contact at Tel: Phone No: 0800-26477 or 0334-1112477.

After introduction the biometric system in Mirpurkhas Division, the same would be introduced gradually in all over the country with objectives to eliminate the corrupt practices and agent mafia.

Under Benazir Income Support Programme, the announcement said that over 1.8 million beneficiaries are getting financial assistance therefore the BISP management is introducing latest technologies to bring transparency in distributing the amount to beneficiaries.

All out efforts are being made to reduce the poverty rate and make the make the poor families self reliance through Benazir Income Support Programme so that they could be able to pool their due share for the development of the country, the statement concluded.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/83801/>

### PM SCHEME: LOAN REQUESTS RISE, BUT PACE OF APPROVAL REMAINS SLOW

The Express Tribune, September 10th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Contrary to the perception that people have lost interest in Prime Minister’s Youth Business Loan Scheme, the number of fresh applicants has increased by 12% but the pace of approval and disbursement remains slow.

The April-June Quarterly Review, released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Friday, revealed that 7,679 people applied for the business loan in the second quarter of 2016, which was 12% higher compared to the first (January-March) quarter.



National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), the country's largest state-owned bank, received 7,353 applications in April-June 2016.

The results dispel the impression that people have lost interest in PM's flagship loan scheme.

Last month, the head of a government-owned bank told a parliamentary committee that about 100 to 200 people were applying for the loan every quarter, indicating lack of interest on their part.

With fresh applications, 71,644 people applied for the scheme by June 30, 2016, according to the central bank. Of these, 14% were female.

However, applications of only 16,951 people – less than one in every four – have been approved. The number of people who actually got cash was even lower at 8,472 – one out of every nine applicants.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif launched the scheme in December 2013 with the aim of providing loans to youth in the range of Rs500,000 to Rs2 million and required funds valuing Rs100-200 billion. Average loan size has so far remained at Rs961,402.

Growing unemployment is one of the main challenges but government policies are not in tune to address it.

The government is extending loans at 6% interest to borrowers while the rate of return for banks is one-year average Karachi Inter-bank Offered Rate (Kibor) plus 5%, bringing total interest rate to 11.35%. It has also assured banks of 5% portfolio risk coverage.

Eighteen commercial banks are offering the loan and Bank Alfalah is the latest entrant. Of these, two private commercial banks have not yet received any application while Meezan Bank is the leading private-sector lender.

Recently, the prime minister expressed his dissatisfaction over the pace of loan disbursement and denial of credit to the applicants.

In the April-June quarter, commercial banks sanctioned Rs680 million in fresh loans, up just 4% from the January-March quarter. In the second quarter, NBP approved Rs524 million worth of credit whereas other commercial banks sanctioned Rs156 million.

Since the launch, 16,951 applications have been approved with a loan amount of Rs17.2 billion, far below the levels the premier desired to see.

Of the Rs17.2 billion, the NBP sanctioned Rs16.7 billion, though disbursements were not even half the sanctioned loans.

By June 30, 2016, banks had made total disbursements of Rs8.2 billion, of which NBP disbursed Rs7.8 billion. First Women Bank approved release of Rs157 million and remaining commercial banks gave Rs214 million.

In the April-June 2016 quarter, disbursements stood at Rs716 million, a growth of 10% over the January-March quarter. It was the slowest growth, coming down from the peak of 17% in the October-December quarter of 2015.

With the addition of 656 fresh loans in the second quarter, the cumulative number of beneficiaries reached 8,472 at the end of June 2016, a growth of 8%. NBP has so far disbursed 8,130 loans or 96% of the total disbursed loans.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1179658/pm-scheme-loan-requests-rise-pace-approval-remains-slow/>

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# October 2016

**NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 24TH TO OCTOBER 30TH 2016**

## **UN AGENCIES URGE TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS**

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, October 24th, 2016

THE Committee on World Food Security opened its plenary last Monday, poised in the wake of international agreements on new global Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to forge ahead with coordinated action to transform the world's food systems and nutrition.

“More than half of the world population suffer from one or more forms of malnutrition,” including hunger, micronutrient deficiency and obesity, told delegates attending the annual meeting of the leading forum for global policymaking on food security and nutrition . “There is a clear failure of food systems to deliver healthy diets to people. And if food systems are the problem, Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is where we should look for solutions,” he said.

The key goals of eradicating extreme poverty, hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 must be achieved in “an increasingly adverse context where population growth, a shrinking resource base, climate change and urbanisation will challenge our ability to find new ways of working and interacting,” he said. The effort will require ‘extended partnerships’, Graziano da Silva said.

“We need to do more, do it better, faster and together... to transform rural areas into places where people can live fulfilling lives, and plan for a bright future. Where every one of the world's 3bn rural people is able to adapt to climate change.

Where each day starts and ends with access to food that is nutritious and plentiful,” said “We must renew our efforts to build more sustainable food systems, which are better able to withstand changing weather patterns and extreme events and respond to nutritional needs – building resilience into our food systems, mitigating the risks, and ensuring we are more prepared for climate shocks in the future,” said noting the effort would require action from diverse stakeholders.

In her opening remarks, emphasised that ‘building sustainable food systems is in essence working to achieve the food security and nutrition-related targets of the 2030 Agenda’.

In addition to acting as the UN system's guiding body for food security and nutrition debates, CFS is structured to allow participants from civil society, the private sector, other UN agencies and international financial institutions, research bodies and other non-state actors a voice in policy decisions. This plenary, the 43, has set a record with more than 1,400 registered participants.

Its week-long deliberations included a host of side events, a forum on urbanisation – an increasingly important theme for food security and nutrition.

Delegates endorsed two sets of policy recommendations, one regarding the role of livestock in sustainable agricultural development and another regarding the importance of connecting smallholders to markets. — FAO

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291791/un-agencies-urge-transformation-of-food-systems>

## PAKISTAN COMMITTED TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION, SAYS PM

The Express Tribune, October 27th, 2016.

Islamabad: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday reiterated Pakistan's resolve to promote economic cooperation through regional integration and achieve the goal of poverty reduction.

Addressing the 15th ministerial meeting of Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), the premier said that for the collective benefit of the region it is necessary for the government member countries to work towards betterment of their people.

Nawaz said CAREC was an important programme that encouraged regional countries to develop physical network, infrastructure, peace, stability and economic development.

He mentioned that the forum was significant in poverty reduction by facilitating trade policies among its member countries.

He welcomed the delegates from 200 countries and expressed confidence that their attendance at the meeting would help realise the dream of the region's prosperity and development.

Proposing measures for the promotion of CAREC's vision, he said a pool of experts could be established in CAREC countries to work on knowledge in human resource.

"Knowledge of these experts in sectors of finance, banking, marketing, energy and infrastructure could be utilised, which would result in intra-regional transfer of information," he added.

He said Pakistan complied with international standards in trade activities and mentioned the improved economic conditions of the country.

He appreciated that CAREC had mobilised \$29 billion in regional development projects and expressed hope that the mid-term review of CAREC in next 10 years would prove as an opportunity to fast-track economic cooperation.

He said Pakistan is a key facilitator of CAREC, bridging South Asia and Central Asia.

"The situation has never been more challenging, however, we are cognizant of dealing with them effectively," he added.

The premier mentioned that the government was experiencing an economic revival at present, with a greater momentum gained in energy, transport and infrastructure activities under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He hoped that besides Pakistan, CPEC would benefit CAREC countries.

[/http://tribune.com.pk/story/1211430/carec-meeting-pakistan-committed-poverty-alleviation-says-pm/](http://tribune.com.pk/story/1211430/carec-meeting-pakistan-committed-poverty-alleviation-says-pm/)

#### **BY 2020: MICROFINANCE INDUSTRY TO RECEIVE RS40B FROM DFID**

The Express Tribune, October 27th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Microfinance industry in the country is expected to get over Rs40 billion leveraging from Department for International Development (DFID) till 2020.

DFID Country Head Joana Reid on Wednesday said that DFID's long-term partnership with the State Bank of Pakistan has delivered on the Financial Inclusion Programme, leveraging Rs20 billion in financing to microfinance providers and establishing key institutions to support sustained and responsible growth.

DFID has also supported creation of the Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company (PMIC) and it will leverage over Rs40 billion to the microfinance industry by 2020.

She was addressing a ceremony organised here by the Pakistan Microfinance Network (PMN) to observe the International Day for Eradication of Poverty.

Additionally, DFID was supporting the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) since 2012, committing £300 million for this initiative until 2019-20.

Under BISP Chairperson Marvi Memon, cash transfers are helping 5.2 million poor women and supporting over 700,000 children gain access to primary education.

Reid recognised that continuous support and commitment of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to social protection of the less privileged including poor women has been critical for achieving these results.

The event-observation of International Day for Eradication of Poverty had active participation of 80 persons representing State Bank of Pakistan, DFID, World Bank, PPAF and other donor agencies as well as PMN members including microfinance banks, non-bank microfinance institutions, rural support programmes and other stakeholders.

In his address, Deputy Governor of State Bank of Pakistan, Saeed Ahmed, said poverty is multi-dimensional and financial inclusion was only one aspect of it and when talking about poverty reduction, other aspects need to be kept under consideration.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1211341/2020-microfinance-industry-receive-rs40b-dfid/>

## PAKISTAN MICROFINANCE INVESTMENT COMPANY LAUNCHED

Dawn, October 28th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company (PMIC), a private-sector firm which aims to use public funding to invest commercially in people and businesses on lower incomes, was launched on Thursday by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.

The PMIC has been created by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and Karandaz Pakistan — funded by UK's Department for International Development (DFID) — and the KfW, a German government-owned development bank.

Microfinance is central to Pakistan's National Financial Inclusion Strategy, launched in May 2015. The PMIC aims to help create a new supply chain for microfinance services. At present, 4.2 million Pakistanis are accessing microfinance services out of an estimated potential market of 20.5m.

The investment company also targets expanding microfinance to those low-income people who would otherwise have no access to banking and other financial services. The financing made in this regard will go through micro-entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises, and help drive business expansion, create jobs and spur economic growth.

Speaking on the occasion, PMIC Chairman Zubyr Soomro said the company was first of its kind as it was a market-based wholesale funding institution for microfinance at national level. "We look for it to lead financial inclusion to encompass affordable housing, livelihoods, energy and education finance," he said. "This is an opportunity for significant growth in access to finance in Pakistan."

British High Commissioner Thomas Drew said that "enterprising people from across communities in Pakistan are being held back by not being able to get access to finance — which they would use to increase their income and build their businesses".

German Ambassador Ina Lepel also spoke on the occasion. "Microfinance is an important catalyst for business, employment and jobs. Germany is glad to have joined forces with our partners in order to foster the business potential of the people of Pakistan, especially the youth, through better access to finance."

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 17TH TO OCTOBER 23RD 2016

POVERTY AND TERROR

Dawn October 18th, 2016

Idrees Khawaja

THE very rich and very poor have one thing in common — the rich will do anything to protect their wealth and the poor will do anything for a meal. Does terrorism factor in their quest for a meal?

There were times when one heard of stolen cars and kidnapped people being taken to Fata for ransom. The burgeoning drug trade made ransom amounts appear miniscule and so the practice diminished. And when the international community began to clamp down on drugs, fighting the invading Soviets in Afghanistan became the latest lucrative job opportunity. Once they withdrew, perpetrating acts of terror became the next occupation. Did any of this have to do with the scant employment opportunities and widespread poverty in Fata?

Finding the right policy prescription for countering terrorism hinges upon correctly answering the following question: what motivates terrorists' recruitment — ideology or money? If we diagnose that enlistment is ideologically driven, then the automatic response is to 'curb fundamentalism'. But, if the conclusion is that it is needs-based, then the recruits' motivations are mercenary in nature. The logical prescription would then be to improve the economic conditions of those most at risk of being inducted by violent extremists. But is 'mercenarism' a plausible explanation for terrorists' recruitment? To answer, let history be our guide.

In *Arrested Development in India*, Clive J. Dewey recounts that, between the 12th and 20th centuries, men from Punjab's northern districts (ie Rawalpindi, Jhelum and Attock) joined almost every invader who came to India through the northwest frontier. Dewey suggests that the pro-enlistment attitude of these men, for which they were labelled 'martial castes', may have had roots in the region's few agricultural prospects — exacerbated by tangled ravines, unreliable rainfall and a low water table.

In *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab*, Rajit K. Mazumder traces British recruitment of a large number of soldiers from Punjab during 1914-19 to serve in the First World War. By 1919, around 200,000 soldiers from Punjab had served in the Indian army — 43pc were from Rawalpindi, Jhelum and Attock — and served on almost all fronts including France and Belgium, Gallipoli and Salonika, Aden and the Persian Gulf, Mesopotamia, Egypt, East Africa and northern China.

Why did they enlist knowing they would be sent to fight and die on foreign fronts — to fight for a foreign, non-Muslim power that was occupying their homeland? In fact, the historical scarcity of opportunities at home made them enlist. The pay, pensions and promises of land grants in canal colonies being developed, mostly in central Punjab, made joining the war effort attractive.

Is it right to assume that the state of economic opportunities in Fata, or similarly lagging regions like south Punjab, might have contributed to 'mercenarism'? In *Understanding Fata*, Naveed Ahmad Shinwari writes that the rough topography, poor education and healthcare services, and scant public infrastructure illustrate a mammoth gap between the people of Fata and the rest of Pakistan.

Published in 2011, Shinwari quotes statistics to support his point: 60pc of Fata's population lives below the poverty line, per capita income is 50pc of the national average, and per capita development expenditure is 33pc of the national average. Less than 10pc of the land is arable; more alarming is the fact that only 41pc of arable land is under irrigation. Economic opportunities are scarce in Fata.

In such an environment, is it any surprise if a young man facing hunger and poverty accepts an offer to join a militant network? Going by northern Punjab's mercenary history, one could conclude that it is not.

But if the issue is indeed poverty-driven, what causes us to mistake it for being ideologically driven? The fact that a majority of recruits come from madressahs may have contributed to this incorrect impression. Recall Musharraf telling us what is widely known: madressahs are this country's biggest NGOs.

With three meals a day, shelter, clothing and a semblance of education being provided for, it is only logical that poor parents would send their children there. Thus, it may not be any talib who opts for militancy — just the poor ones. Unfortunately, the majority of madressah-goers are poor.

Poverty, then, contributes heavily to terrorism and we know that terrorism, in turn, deters economic activity. One of our unsung heroes, the late Dr Mahbubul Haq, offered the right policy prescription for countering violent extremism back in 1971 when he wrote, "We were taught to take care of our [Gross National Product] as this will take care of poverty, but let us reverse this and take care of poverty as this will take care of our GNP."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290573>

#### 40% CHILDREN IN SINDH UNDERWEIGHT: SURVEY

The Express Tribune, October 18th, 2016

**KARACHI:** In Pakistan, two out of every five children are stunted, meaning they are small for their age due to chronic malnutrition, a condition that has lifelong consequences on physical and mental development, explained Sindh planning and development department's nutrition coordinator, Dr Samar Memon.

She added that the 2011 National Nutrition Survey showed that half of children under five years of age in Sindh are stunted, 40% are underweight, while 73% are anemic.

To combat this, the department and the World Food Programme (WFP) have launched a secretariat for the Scaling-Up Nutrition (Sun) initiative in Karachi.

The movement brings together government officials, civil society members, donors, businesses and researchers in a collective effort to improve nutrition, said Aslam Shaheen, chief nutritionist and Sun focal person at the ministry of planning, development and reforms.

He said that the government of Pakistan joined the Sun movement in January 2013 and agreed to establish a secretariat at both national and provincial levels.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, Sindh planning and development minister Hazar Khan Bijarani said the provincial government has shown its strong commitment to rooting out malnutrition and stunting by allocating Rs1 billion in its annual development programme for 2016-2017. Bijarani added that nutrition has an important role for the growth of a nation and said that the government is working to combat malnutrition with the help of donor agencies.

"The sorry state of affairs in the health and nutrition sector still prevails and only political dedication can save the future of the coming generations," he warned.

Sun is a unique movement, presently it has 57 member countries across the globe, and was founded in 2010 on the principle that all people have a right to food and good nutrition informed WFP acting country director Stephen Gluning.

"Tackling malnutrition, especially for mothers and children, is one of the greatest challenges Pakistan is facing today. It can be done but only if we all combine our efforts, pull together, work in partnership and prioritise," he explained.

In a province like Sindh, where two out of three families cannot afford a nutritious diet, we need to look for solutions at a local level and the Sun secretariat in Karachi is a key step in this direction, he said.

We will significantly reduce the menace of malnutrition and stunting as soon as possible, vowed Muhammad Waseem, additional chief secretary of the planning and development department. He predicted that through this initiative, the government will improve the state of nutrition in Sindh to such an extent that it will be an eye-opener for all other provinces.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1201209/40-children-sindh-underweight-survey/>

## HUNGER CRISIS: MISERABLE GHI SCORE

Business Recorder, 18 October 2016

Yet another report and yet another damning indication that Pakistan needs to amp up its efforts to tackle the crisis which is putting countless generations at stake. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) has ranked Pakistan on a “serious” level with its score being 33.4.

Although Pakistan has improved from an “alarming” state from a score of 35.1 in 2008, it has still performed poorly in the region. In comparison with our neighbours, the country has performed worse than India and Bangladesh which have scored 28.5 and 27.1, respectively.

Sadly, the majority of countries that have underperformed Pakistan are those that have been undergoing civil wars and lack any sort of political stability. These countries include Central African Republic (CAR), Chad and Zambia and are witnessing an “alarming” level of hunger.

The GHI calculates the scores based on four components which include under nourishment (insufficient caloric intake), child wasting (low weight for height), child stunting (low height for age) and child mortality. The higher the score, the more serious is the hunger level associated with that country.

According to the report the percentage of undernourished population in Pakistan stands at 22 percent whereas Bangladesh and India have 16 and 15 percent. As this column has stressed previously, even though the level of absolute poverty in Pakistan is much lower than that of India, the prevalence of malnourishment is surprisingly much higher in the former.

These statistics put a huge question mark on the performance of both the federal and provincial governments. After the eighteenth amendment health has become the domain of provincial governments, which will make it much harder to aim for a concerted effort aimed at eradicating hunger in the country.

The federal ministries tasked with attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), the first of which is eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, include the Ministry of Food Security and Research as well as the Ministry of Health. Even when it comes to health, the focus is only limited to medication and hospitals, which also paint a disappointing picture. These ministries need to get their act together because their dismal performance speaks volume about the importance being given to tackling the hunger crisis.

Observing the performance of the government over the past few years, it seems the focus has been only on two sectors, power and infrastructure. The budget allocated less than one percent of GDP to the health sector by the federal government and the provincial expenditures are equally miserable. A dangerous precedent is being set that it is maybe alright to go all out on one or two areas at the cost of neglecting all other sectors including health, education and social welfare.

As this column has stressed earlier, almost 44 percent of the children in Pakistan are stunted meaning half of our next generation will be mentally and physically malnourished. Research has shown that young child malnutrition can cost countries from 4% to 11% of their GDP. Taking a long term view, the increase in productivity that the government

hopes to achieve by focusing exclusively on infrastructure and energy will be more than offset by the decrease due to a stunted generation of future workers.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/10/18/2-page/804823-news.html>

‘WE CANNOT CELEBRATE OUR FESTIVALS OR CREMATE OUR DEAD’

Dawn, October 17th, 2016

Nabeel Anwar Dhakku

**KHEWRA:** It is a hot, summer weekend and the narrow road passing through the hilly town of Khewra is lined with cars, their owners busy exploring the Khewra Salt Mines, which were discovered 2,342 years ago by the men of Alexander the Great.

Weekends are peak times for souvenir shops and guides in the mines and 16-year-old Akash is busy catering to customers in a small souvenir shop which also sells decoration pieces made of salt.

“It would have been better if you had come on a weekday, there are not that many customers and I would have been able to talk at leisure,” he says in between orders.

Akash studies at the Al Beruni College in Pind Dadan Khan and in order to fund his studies and help with the family’s expenses, works part time in the souvenir shop, where his 63-year-old father, Suraj Prakash, also works. However, because the shop is a small one and only sells low-priced products, Akash is only able to make Rs5,000 each month.

Akash belongs to a Hindu tribe which decided to stay in Pakistan after the partition in 1947. His ancestor, Roop Lal worked as a washerman (dhobi) in Sambhar Salt Lake, located in the north-western state of Rajasthan in India. He came to Khewra with his British employers in the early 1870s, as it was common for British officers to take their servants with them.

“My grandfather was a dhobi and came here in 1872 when the British started developing the Khewra Salt Mines,” said Suraj Prakash.

He said that Roop Lal continued working as a washerman for his British bosses till his death, after which his son Ram Chand was given the same job by the British government. It was Ram Chand who decided to stay in Khewra instead of migrating to India at the time of partition.

Half the population of Khewra was Hindu before the partition and the expansive houses left behind by wealthy Hindus when they left for India still stand, though they are in dilapidated condition. However, only three Hindu families remain in Khewra today, all siblings of Roop Lal’s and Akash belongs to one of these households, all of which are low income families and struggle with their daily expenses.

“Till a few decades ago, life was simpler and affordable. We could provide for our families by washing clothes,” Suraj Prakash said.

He explained that due to the scarcity of water in Khewra and the advent of modern techniques for washing clothes, the trend for hiring washermen has died out in Khewra. He said that those who could afford to have also opened dhobi shops, making working as washer men all the more difficult.

“We do not own property here and after living here for 150 years, my family does not own a small shop. We only have a small mud house to our name,” he said.



The Hindus of Khewra are also faced with alienation and loneliness.

“We feel like aliens here. The Muslims do not mix with us. They do not attend our weddings, nor do they invite us to theirs,” he said.

The 35 students in his class do not include him in their circle, Akash said.

“I feel alone in college because I am the only non-Muslim in the college. I watch as the rest of the class play together,” he said.

The teenager dreams of becoming a civil officer one day and is worried he will have to give up his studies due to financial problems.

There is not even a cremation ground in Khewra and Hindus of the town have to bury their loved ones instead of burning them according to their religion.

Mr Prakash said the temples of Khewra were also ransacked by rioters after the Babri Masjid incident.

“We worship in our homes and bury our loved ones,” he said, adding that their forefather’s decision to stay was wrong. “Our lives would have been different were we living among other Hindus. We could have celebrated Holi, Diwali and other festivals with others instead of just observing them in our homes,” Mr Prakash said,

Talking to Dawn, the patron of the Pakistan Hindu Council, Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, who also represents Hindus in the National Assembly said: “Cremation is our basic right. There was a cremation ground in Khewra before partition and there are many temples there. But properties belonging to Hindus were occupied with the state’s support.”

“We do not know how much of land that belongs to Hindus is illegally occupied and I recently raised this question on the floor of the assembly as well,” he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290488>

## LOW COST HOUSING NEEDS A POLICY PUSH

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, October 17th, 2016

Mohiuddin Aazim

Housing for all remains a dream unfulfilled, chiefly due to the lack of a policy push and an excessive involvement of investment hoppers in the housing and real estate business.

The recent decision of the House Building Finance Company (HBFC) to go for increased financing of housing units for low and middle income groups may do little to correct the situation in the short term.

But if the decision is implemented, in letter and in spirit, coupled with other required measures, a large number of the homeless can get their own accommodations.

According to HBFC officials, the company will now provide finance on priority basis to those people who need up to Rs1.275m, though it will continue to lend larger sums of money as well.

The Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD), however, questions such priority lending and its chief alleges that the move is aimed at benefiting some politically connected NGOs involved in assisting homeless people.

Regardless of this controversy, given the ground realities, the HBFC decision is potentially a step in the right direction.

According to the State Bank of Pakistan, the backlog of housing units has exceeded 9m and 400,000 units are added to it every year. Back in 2005, the then government had come up with an ambitious 'housing for all' plan backed by a comprehensive policy framework to make it a reality. But like many other ambitious plans this too remained unexecuted.

One of the reasons for the failure of housing plans has been an over-reliance on the private sector, dominated by investment-hoppers, including the politically connected powerful and rich. 'And that keeps our housing sector in the shape that we continue to see year after year', says a senior executive of HBFC.

Whereas the government has long stopped constructing housing units for its employees, even the financing of loans by state-run institutions fall short of all expectations.

HBFC is the only public sector company that has a one-fourth share in housing finance, the remaining three-fourth being catered to banks and development finance institutions.

But formal financing (by HBFC and banks and DFIs) itself meets the requirements of a very small percentage of the overall demand.

Considering that there is a backlog of 9m housing units and assuming that the average cost of a building a house is around Rs1m, there is a financing backlog of Rs9tn! And, even if we take the estimated average cost of a housing unit at half a million rupees, the financing backlog in housing sector comes to Rs4.5tn. Compare this, to the entire stock of housing loans of all banks, DFIs and HBFC (Rs63bn at end-March 2016) and you get a really rude reality check.

Now, compare the annual housing loans of banks, DFIs and HFBC (Rs23.2bn between April 2015 and March 2016) with the amount that is needed to construct 400,000 housing units in a year (somewhere between Rs200bn-Rs400bn depending upon whether the cost of construction is taken as half a million rupees or Rs1m). Here, we are. Formal financing accounts for slightly over 5-10pc of the estimated fresh financing requirements of the housing sector!

Such a huge financing gap cannot be filled through conventional methods. There is clearly a need for an out-of-the-box approach. Financial agencies need to double up their efforts to lend aggressively.

Central bankers say the presence of a comprehensive set of guidelines for house finance has now made this easier. The federal and provincial governments should join hands with the private sector for the construction of large housing schemes for low and middle income groups.

Modalities for this can be worked out in coordination with builders, public sector entities and mortgage finance institutions.

Estimates differ on segment-wise shortage of housing units. But various studies done on this subject have one thing in common i.e. the housing sector is heavily skewed in favour of the upper middle class and the rich. Two studies, both conducted by the private sector, show that 50-68pc people in urban slum areas live in improper dwellings including shanty houses. Besides, 1pc of those who own large bungalows also own 12pc of the entire construction-covered area of Karachi.

"Such discrepancies can be removed if we can encourage more housing units through proper policies, maybe in the form of apartments, and at the same time discourage formal financing of too large and too big bungalows and town houses," opines a housing finance executive of a large local bank.

The upward revision in valuation tables of the real estate in selected cities across the country and then an immediate downward revision in Sindh indicate that provincial and federal authorities have still not learnt to work in harmony even in the areas that are of utmost public interest, builders point out.

“In such an environment, we don’t expect formulation and more importantly strict execution of a national housing policy,” says a former chairman of ABAD. “But, I think ‘housing for all’ policies can be made and implemented initially by Sindh and Punjab with active involvement of banks.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1290462/low-cost-housing-needs-a-policy-push>

## EQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES VITAL FOR ERADICATING POVERTY: SHAHBAZ

Business Recorder, October 17, 2016

Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has said that service to the ailing humanity and eradication of poverty are high values of humanity. It is the golden principle of Islam that every human being should lead respectable life, he added. He said eradication of poverty is a challenge and there is need to take co-ordinated steps at every level for coping with it.

In his message on International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Punjab Chief Minister said that poverty is an economic dilemma and every section of society has to play an active role for overcoming this problem. He said aim of observing the day is to create awareness and expedite efforts at international level for the elimination of poverty. He said there is a need of highlighting awareness among the families leading miserable lives about their rights. He said on this day determination of expediting our efforts for eliminating poverty from the country need to be reiterated. Punjab Chief Minister said that poverty becomes a cause of creating law and order problems and lawlessness in the society.

Eradication of poverty is necessary for controlling extremism and terrorism, he added.

He said it is imperative to move forward with effective steps and strategy for reducing problems pertaining to poverty. He said menace of poverty can be reduced to a large extent by removing economic discrepancy in the society; therefore, it is the duty of every person of the society to take part in this noble cause. He said equal distribution of resources is necessary for eradicating poverty.

He said it is duty of well-to-do and affluent people to come forward for eradicating poverty and they will earn blessings of Allah Almighty in this world and the world hereafter through this act, he added. The Chief Minister said that Pakistan Muslim League-N government has started revolutionary programmes for overcoming the problems of poverty and the aim of these programmes is to raise the living standard of the people living below poverty line.

He said a large number of poor families of the province are benefiting from welfare programmes of the Punjab government. He said that on this day, pledge has to be made for determination for utilising all our resources and efforts for eliminating poverty from the country.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/93943/>

## WHERE THE POOR LIVE

Dawn, October 20th, 2016

Dr Noman Ahmed

ON Oct 13, Sindh’s chief minister directed the Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (SKAA) and senior officials to prepare a plan to upgrade 100 informal settlements to the level of townships. A presentation was given to the chief minister by the concerned officials regarding the existing state of katchi abadis. While the decision to rehabilitate these neglected settlements is commendable, many issues need to be addressed in an objective manner.

There are multiple perceptions about such settlements. Some quarters believe that katchi abadis are scars on our urban face, and must be demolished and replaced by 'neat' and 'orderly' structures. Urban Sindh's local political elite consider them as vehicles for promoting in-migrations to cities, particularly from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal areas.

Realtors view katchi abadis as potential gold mines and lobby for allowing high-density high-rise developments on these strategic locations. The reality, however, belies such visions. A plethora of empirical, independent works of research suggests that katchi abadis are a response to the inability of state institutions to supply low-income housing.

In 1947, when millions of new citizens from across the subcontinent opted for urban locations, jhuggis were allowed in open tracts. Since government rehabilitation schemes did not keep pace with the burgeoning refugee population in search of basic housing, many such settlements rapidly expanded. Soon thereafter, economic compulsions forced millions towards the cities' industries in search of employment. Left helpless by the state, they were forced to help themselves (albeit unsystematically).

Due to low costs, locations such as the banks of the Lyari and Malir rivers, and the edges of Gujjar Nullah and other drains became prime spots for the poor to settle in. Initial attempts by the government to bulldoze the settlements were soon abandoned. With time, they became more technically sophisticated. Learning from planned settlements, katchi abadis adopted the pattern of grid iron rectilinear layouts. Many government functionaries developed clandestine links with this process and derived hefty rents.

Pakistan's cities, especially Karachi, have many useful lessons to offer for issues of informal settlements in general and low-income housing in particular. The Orangi Pilot Project's (OPP) work is a case in point. Well-known social scientist, Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan, and architects Arif Hasan, Perween Rahman and Saleem Alimuddin observed that people in katchi abadis were already building their abodes and investing in services.

They needed technical, social and administrative guidance to produce effective outcomes. By conducting action research on solutions developed by the people and acting as a catalyst, OPP guided technically sound and economically valid development.

When lane- and street-level services were developed, the people (with OPP's assistance) lobbied government agencies to connect their lane-level infrastructure with trunk-scale services. The work — driven by community participation, funding and materials — sustained without fail; repairs and maintenance were also community-led. This model is still replicated in many places in Pakistan and the developing world, although without much fanfare or glamour.

Similarly, the concept of incremental housing development for low-income communities has been an internationally acclaimed best practice since the 1980s. After learning that land supply for housing results in speculative ventures, social scientist and bureaucrat Tasneem Ahmed Siddiqui and his team introduced the targeting of urban poor before sanctioning allotment documents. Mobilisation and social support were constantly provided. This approach was made a part of the 2001 national housing policy.

It must be remembered that katchi abadis will continue to grow and multiply if urban housing options for the teeming millions are not devised. Upgrading these settlements is a process, not a project. New kinds of transformations are taking place in the abadis. With rising urbanisation rates and the high cost of planned and formal housing in cities, this phenomenon is likely to intensify in the coming years.

Informally developed high-rises replacing low-rise housing are becoming increasingly visible in settlements close to Karachi's centre. Water tankers (a common mode of service delivery) are becoming increasingly costly, as are electricity and gas supplies. Whereas some might believe that the poor enjoy free services, the reality is that they pay many times more than residents of planned neighbourhoods. Given the informal nature of these transactions, however, there is little formal evidence to substantiate this claim.

SKAA can learn from the available resources, staff and leadership of OPP, Saiban (that promotes incremental housing) and similar organisations. The authority should formulate short- and medium-term plans with community

involvement at all levels of planning and implementation. This is the only approach that has delivered credible results in our katchi abadis.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291017/where-the-poor-live>

## SHC ORDERS INSPECTION OF THAR HOSPITALS AMID RISING NEWBORN DEATHS

Dawn, October 22nd, 2016

HYDERABAD: The Sindh High Court's Hyderabad circuit bench has directed the Tharparkar sessions judge to depute a magistrate who will inspect hospitals within the district and prepare a comprehensive report with regard to the availability or otherwise of medical officers and treatment facilities to patients. The report should reach the court within 15 days, it said and adjourned the matter till Nov 17.

A division bench comprising Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Mohammad Iqbal Maher was seized with a petition filed by Advocate Kanji Mal, who appeared before the bench in person on Thursday to plead the case. He has cited the health secretary, provincial health services director general, Tharparkar health officer and others as respondents.

The petitioner submitted that for the last three-four years, Tharparkar district had been witnessing unabated deaths of newborns and the toll was rising. He said the Supreme Court had also taken suo motu notice of the situation. It seemed that this district was not a priority of the federal and provincial governments.

Advocate Mal further submitted that recent media reports suggested a deadly famine having hit Tharparkar and attributed the increasing deaths to malnutrition. He said the health facilities in the district lacked adequate quantity of medicines and number of equipment to deal with the issue.

The current crisis, he claimed, was caused by maladministration and mismanagement on the part of the federal, provincial and district authorities.

The bench was informed that [over 1.5 million] people of Thar mainly depended on farming during rains but drought had badly affected the sector. Livestock rearing is their other major livelihood with an estimated 6.5 million cattle head present in the district. Inadequate rainfall coupled with a lack of food and health facilities for the people and their animals had badly been affecting both livelihoods over the past few years.

The petitioner stated that infant mortality had been on the rise over the last three-four years and among the reason were unavailability of medical officers and proper treatment facilities to the people. He said that in the Nangarparkar taluka hospital, only four doctors out of 32 sanctioned posts were made available.

He further stated that the health situation across the district was alarming and patients were referred to one hospital from another and also advised to go to private laboratories for various medical examinations due to unavailability of doctors and technical staff at government hospitals.

The petitioner stated that despite an emergency-like situation, no action was being taken by respondents against 'ghost' doctors and those who had proceeded on long leave.

He said that the Sindh government had announced a plan to set up a teaching hospital and college in Mithi but there was no progress so far in the implementation of the plan.

He prayed to court to declare the current crisis absence of good governance and appoint a commissioner to visit government hospitals and health facilities to ascertain the conditions prevailing there.

The petitioner also prayed to court to direct the chief secretary to initiate an inquiry into the human disaster being caused by negligence, apathy and corruption.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291481/shc-orders-inspection-of-thar-hospitals-amid-rising-newborn-deaths>

## FOOD POLICY DRAFT FINALISED TO HELP ELIMINATE HUNGER

The Express Tribune, October 22nd, 2016.

Islamabad: The draft of National Food Security Policy had been finalised in order to achieve zero hunger targets in the country, Minister for National Food Security and Research Sikandar Hayat Bosan said here Friday.

Addressing an event organised to commemorate the World Food Day, he said that the document was presented to lawmakers and members of civil society for their input to make it a vibrant document to ensure food safety and security in the country.

The event was organised by the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) to highlight the significance of the day and to create awareness about climate change and its effects on the agriculture sector of the country.

The theme of the day for this year was “Climate is changing, food and agriculture must too.” The minister said that the food security policy document gave ample focus to crop diversification, climate change, natural disasters and zero hunger programme. He said there was immense pressure on natural resources and environment due to intensification of crop and livestock sectors in order to feed an ever growing population in the country. As a result, he said it was experiencing rapid groundwater depletion, watersheds degradation, desertification, deforestation and rangelands deterioration.

Bosan said that agro-sector was vulnerable due to the adverse impact of climate changes, which was affecting the struggle to ensure food security for over 180 million people in the country.

The minister informed the gathering that government, taking climate change into account, was taking measures to minimise the use of fossil fuel and was introducing solar pumping system, besides shifting into climate smart crops cultivation and processing techniques.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1205920/food-policy-draft-finalised-help-eliminate-hunger/>

## NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 10TH TO OCTOBER 16TH 2016

### HALF THE WORLD’S EXTREMELY POOR ARE CHILDREN

Dawn, October 10th, 2016

Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: Half the world’s extremely poor are children and almost 385 million children were living in extreme poverty in 2013. Nine out of 10 of those children lived in just 20 countries, says a joint study of the World Bank and Unicef released on Sunday.

The study marks South Asia, including Pakistan, as the second worst in the world, with nearly 36 per cent children living in extreme poverty. More than 30pc of the children living in extreme poverty live in India alone.

“Since countries without data are not included in the analysis, the real share could be even higher,” researchers from the World Bank and the United Nations Children’s Fund warn.

“The political stability of a country matters. Children are most at risk of living in extreme poverty in countries that have experienced conflict,” the study says. “Nearly 58pc of children who live in such countries affected by conflict and fragility live in extremely poor households.”

In such places, the livelihoods of citizens are threatened by a range of factors, including inadequate national economic management, a lack of policies to combat inequity and a weak civil society.

The study — ‘Ending extreme poverty: A focus on children’ — finds that children in developing countries are more than twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty.

In 2013, 19.5pc of children in 89 countries were living in households that survived on an average of \$1.90 a day per person or less, compared to just 9.2pc of adults.

The study points out that children living in poverty are almost certain to miss out on a good start in life. The consequences of inadequate nutrition, a lack of early stimulation and learning, and exposure to stress last a lifetime. They lead to stunted development, low levels of skills needed for life and work, limited future productivity as adults, and transmission of poverty down the generations.

The study warns that “neglecting children fails to build the human capital needed for sustained economic prosperity in today’s world”.

The researchers examined data from 89 countries representing over 84pc of the developing world’s population. They found that almost 385m children were living in extremely poor households in 2013.

“This cannot be explained by a large youth population. In fact, children are disproportionately affected, as they make up around a third of the sample population, but half of the extreme poor,” they warn.

The children are the worst off — over 20pc of all children below five years of age in the developing world live in extremely poor households, compared with nearly 15pc of 15-17 year-olds.

Children living in extremely poor households are concentrated in certain parts of the developing world. Sub-Saharan Africa has both the highest rates of children living in extreme poverty at just under 49pc, and the largest share of the world’s extremely poor children, at over 51pc.

Where a child lives within the home country also plays a role. Eight out of 10 of all children in extremely poor households live in rural areas. Over a quarter of children living in rural areas live in extremely poor households, compared to just over 9pc in urban areas.

It is not only extreme poverty that disproportionately affects children, but poverty more widely. The World Bank Group also looks at higher poverty lines — such as those living under \$3.10 a day, which includes people living in moderate and extreme poverty.

When all those living on less than \$3.10 are examined, children remain far worse off. About 45pc of children are living in households subsisting on less than \$3.10 a day per person, compared with nearly 27pc of adults. Indeed, the analysis shows that across all possible poverty lines, children are the worst affected.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1289199>

## MARVI FACES PROTEST AT MIRPURKHAS CEREMONY

Dawn October 10th, 2016

MIRPURKHAS: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) youth wing activists and a large number of women beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) held a protest demonstration when BISP chairperson Marvi Memon arrived here on Sunday to inaugurate the biometric system installed at an Omni shop.

The purpose for the installation of the system is to minimise chances of corruption in the disbursement of financial aid to BISP beneficiaries.

The protesters raised slogans against corruption by some local BISP officials and unauthorised people when Ms Memon, along with Sindh BISP Director General Naeem Khakheli and Mirpurkhas division director Ziaullah Bhutto, arrived at Makkah Masjid chowk in Satellite Town, where the Omni shop is situated. Some of the protesters demanded

removal of Ms Memon for her failure in addressing widespread complaints regarding a fair and easy disbursement of the assistance.

Led by the youth wing president, Kamran Qureshi, and another activist, Abdul Rasheed, the protesters carrying banners and placards demanded action against unscrupulous BISP functionaries and the unauthorised elements who, they alleged, had been cheating simple women on the pretext of getting them the money. They claimed that Ms Memon did not pay attention to hundreds of complaints made by BISP beneficiaries regarding corruption and swindle.

At the same venue, a group of PML-N activists started raising slogans in favour of Ms Memon.

When she was asked about the protesters, she said they were actually “agents”, and not PML-N workers, who were disturbed by the measures to curb their illegal activities.

Later, Ms Memon inaugurated the newly-installed biometric machine.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1289108/marvi-faces-protest-at-mirpurkhas-ceremony>

#### MICROFINANCE — WHY POOR MISS OUT

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, October 10th, 2016

Dr Abdur Rehman Cheema | Dr Amir Rafique

POVERTY is a manifest deprivation in human welfare, and a multidimensional phenomenon. In addition to the lack of roti, kapra aur makan — the basic rights — it also includes the lack of ‘capability’ — to overcome illness, hunger, violence, ignorance and injustice.

Poverty means the absence of opportunity, empowerment and security, and not just the absence of food on the table. What is the way out? While not a cure for all ills, microfinance is the provision of financial services to low-income clients or segments, which usually lack access to banking and financial services.

More broadly, it is a phenomenon whose objective is ‘a world in which as many poor and near-poor households as possible have permanent access to an appropriate range of high quality financial services, including credit, savings, insurance, and fund transfers’.

According to the Planning Commission of Pakistan, 29.5pc of the population, or roughly ‘60m’ (we do not have accurate figure as the population census has long been pending), is living below the new poverty line of Rs3,030 per capita per month.

In monetary terms, the poverty line of Rs3,030 per month is still \$1 per capita per day. But the World Bank has revised its estimate of the poverty line to \$1.75 per capita per day.

The worrisome thing is that if, at the threshold of \$1 per day, 30pc of the population is living below the poverty line, and if this threshold is raised to \$1.75, then this would automatically imply that even more than 50pc of the population is living below the poverty line. The figures might be even higher if we talk about the under-nourished and food insecure population.

The ‘Government’s Vision 2025’ stresses a broader definition of poverty — one which includes health, education and other amenities alongside income and consumption. It promises an increase in resource allocation to improve service delivery, governance and innovation in the economy.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index, released earlier this year, measures deprivations experienced by individuals in health, education and standard of living thus reflecting upon other non-monetary facets of poverty.



In Pakistan, the microfinance sector has been operational in various forms and sizes for over four decades, but the financial inclusion programmes have an urban bias. Currently, 85pc of farmers are formally excluded from financial services. Agricultural loans only account for 7.6pc of total bank loans, and that too with lending concentrated in Punjab.

The informal credit market is dominated by Arthis (middle men), who charge exorbitant interest rates. The low level of funding is due to a number of reasons: such as the shortage of financial service providers and their unwillingness to serve the poor, the lack of awareness, financial literacy and education among the poor.

Currently, we have three different models of microfinance services, i.e. micro finance institutions (MFIs), micro finance banks (MFBs) and rural support programmes (RSPs). The market is dominated by MFBs followed by MFIs and then RSPs in terms of active borrowers and portfolio. Commercial banks and government owned institutions also provide microfinance services.

Microfinance goals for MFIs/MFBs/RSPs are there mainly to provide access to financial services to the poor; to develop sustainable societies; to channelise resources to micro and small enterprises, to create employment opportunities; to enable the rural poor to utilise available resources and generate income in their areas.

Have most of the microfinance providers been able to fulfil all, or some, of these objectives? The answer unfortunately is 'no'. Many of them serve the relatively less poor for a number of reasons: strict eligibility standards and bias in favour of the relatively less poor clients.

Standard microfinance models are incapable of reaching the poorest of the poor as they charge high interest rates because of the transactional cost of issuing loans. Higher rates also ensure that all the risk aspects are covered though this adversely affects the poorest of the poor people.

The target market of microfinance is estimated to be 25-30m borrowers. The outreach of the sector is just 40pc of the target.

The key issue in microfinance is to ensure its access to the poorest of the poor, particularly those living in rural areas with grassroots social mobilisation. Experience of grassroots process of social mobilisation of such organisations can be found in the National Rural Support Programme Microfinance Bank and the Community Investment Fund. The Rural Support Programme Network can be helpful under strenuous efforts to improve the capability of the poor.

If poverty has to be alleviated, the inherent potential of the poor people needs to be harnessed. Rural and poor-centric credit initiatives need to be scaled up.

The writers work at the Rural Support Programmes Network and COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), Islamabad, respectively.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1289166/microfinance-why-poor-miss-out>

INDIA'S HUNGER CRISIS WORSE THAN OTHER SOUTH ASIAN NATIONS: REPORT

Business Recorder, October 12, 2016

Like most of its south Asian neighbours, India has a 'serious' hunger problem with 15.2 percent of its citizens undernourished and 38.7 percent of under-five children stunted, said the Global Hunger Index report released by the Washington based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on Tuesday. According to the report's global rankings for 2016, India, which ranked 97 among 118 developing nations, fares worse than all its neighbours such as China (29), Nepal (72), Myanmar (75), Sri Lanka (84) and Bangladesh (90), except for Pakistan (107).

Also, India's global hunger index or GHI score of 28.5 is worse than the developing country average score of 21.3. While countries like Brazil and Argentina have a GHI score of less than 5 and ranked the best among developing nations, nations like Chad and Central African Republic fare the worst with a score of 44.3 and 46.1, respectively.

The global community is not on course to end hunger by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal deadline of 2030, IFPRI said in a statement while releasing the report.

It added that if hunger declines at the same rate as it did since 1992, more than 45 countries, including India, Pakistan, Haiti, Yemen, and Afghanistan, will still have ‘moderate’ to ‘alarming’ hunger scores in the year 2030, far short of the goal to end hunger by that year.

However, the report highlighted some bright spots, like 20 countries, including Rwanda, Cambodia, and Myanmar, who reduced their GHI scores by over 50 percent each since 2000 (India’s GHI score fell by 25.4 percent during this period), and the fact that no developing country for which data was available was in the “extremely alarming” category.

The GHI score is a multidimensional index composed of four indicators—proportion of undernourished in the population, and prevalence of child mortality, child stunting, and child wasting. On the severity scale, a GHI score of less than 10 means “low” prevalence of hunger while a score of more than 50 implies an “extremely alarming” situation.

<http://www.brecorder.com/top-stories/0/92911/>

22PC OF PAKISTAN’S POPULATION IS UNDERNOURISHED: REPORT

Dawn, October 14th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is unlikely to reach “low” hunger levels by 2030 by the close of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), according to the Global Hunger Index (GHI) published by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

The report released on Wednesday claimed that 22 per cent of Pakistan’s population was undernourished. Conservative projects find that more than 45 countries — including India, Pakistan, Haiti, Yemen and Afghanistan — will not reach low hunger levels by 2030.

The current rate of reducing hunger will leave South Asia and Africa south of the Sahara with GHI scores of between “moderate and serious” hunger — falling far short of the goal to reach “Zero Hunger by 2030”.

Despite the progress made, levels of hunger remain “serious” or “alarming” in 50 of the 118 countries.

Around 20 countries have populations in which at least one quarter of the population is undernourished. Nearly 13 countries in the report have insufficient data to calculate GHI scores, yet based on the existing data and reliable reports, 10 of these countries have hunger levels that are cause for significant concern.

The GHI score for the developing world as a whole is 21.3, which is in the low end of the “serious” category. Regionally, Africa south of the Sahara has the highest hunger level, followed closely by South Asia. Rounding out the top 10 countries with the highest levels of hunger after Central African Republic, Chad, and Zambia are Haiti, Madagascar, Yemen, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, and Niger.

The 2016 GHI has been calculated for 118 countries for which data is available for four indicators: the percentage of the population that is undernourished; the percentage of children under five who suffer from wasting; the percentage of children under five who suffer from stunting; and the percentage of children who die before the age of five. The global community is not on course to end hunger by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal deadline of 2030, according to data from the 2016 GHI published by the IFPRI.

The report also outlined some bright spots in the fight to end world hunger. The level of hunger in developing countries as measured by the GHI has fallen by 29 percent since 2000.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1289893/22pc-of-pakistans-population-is-undernourished-report>

## SHANGLA PEOPLE PROTEST BLOCKING OF BISP CARDS

Dawn, October 15th, 2016

SHANGLA: Residents of various villages blocked the Swat-Bisham road at Alpuri here on Friday to protest blocking of their Benazir Income Support Programme cards over unknown reasons.

The protesters led by local government representatives chanted slogans for acceptance of their demands. They also held banners and placards inscribed with slogans in support of their demands.

Mohammad Alam, nazim of village council Pirabad, said thousands of BISP cards had been blocked due to which the beneficiaries were facing problems.

“The scheme was established by the former PPP government for financial support of the poor and needy women but the incumbent government did not bother to give attention to the project. The government should ensure smooth provision of the stipend to the poor,” he suggested.

Mr Alam claimed that the Sindh government was providing Rs10,000 stipend to poor women but the federal government was trying to close down the project as the blockade of cards was part of the plan.

Subhanullah, another local government representative from Koz Kana, said they had submitted complaints in BISP district office, but the officials were claiming that the cards were blocked because of some technical fault. The demonstrators warned that if the BISP cards were not unblocked within 15 days, they would start a full-fledge protest movement against the government.

When contacted BISP regional director told Dawn that a large number of cards had been blocked due a technical fault occurred in the system. He said over 2,000 complaints had been registered and forwarded to the BISP headquarters in Islamabad.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1290142/shangla-people-protest-blocking-of-bisp-cards>

## BISP, WCCI K-P SIGN MOU FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The Express Tribune, October 15th, 2016.

PESHAWAR: Investing in women’s economic empowerment sets a direct path towards poverty alleviation and financial inclusiveness and BISP is trying its best to empower its beneficiaries through various initiatives, said Minister of State and Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Marvi Memon on Friday.

“Besides managing poverty through unconditional cash transfers, the BISP has embarked on poverty exit strategies as well as making its beneficiaries self-reliant,” she added, during the signing ceremony of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BISP and the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WCCI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) on skill development training for BISP beneficiaries.

The BISP K-P Director General Irfan Yusufzai and WCCI K-P President Shumaima Arbab signed the MoU.

According to the agreement, 500 BISP beneficiaries will be trained in the fields of dress-making, jewellery designing, fashion designing, leather goods, home accessories and woven wool products.

WCCI Chairperson Itrat Bilour, on the occasion, acknowledged the efforts of BISP in making lives of the poorest of the poor better and assured that the cooperation would strengthen further.

“These trainings would open up new avenues of opportunities for BISP beneficiaries and make them financially and economically empowered,” remarked Memon.

Highlighting the milestones achieved by BISP, she informed that the gathering about 1,157,483 households of K-P received BISP stipend on a quarterly basis and 252,180 children have been enrolled in Charsadda, Kohat, Mansehra, Malakand, Nowshera, Bannu and Haripur under Waseela-e-Taleem (WeT) initiative.

She said that the pilot phase of the new poverty survey to update National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) includes Haripur, Lakki Marwat, Charsadda and Mohmand Agency, adding that the updated NSER would be an asset for planning and development in the country and the whole of FATA would be covered in the new poverty survey.

While appreciating the role of the government in making BISP a success story, K-P Governor Iqbal Zafar Jhagra said that the BISP was the brainchild of Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar. He praised the BISP efforts to uplift FATA and initiate the new poverty survey for NSER update.

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://tribune.com.pk/story/1199085/bisp-wcci-k-p-sign-mou-skill-development/>

## IRREGULARITIES DETECTED IN ZAKAT FUND DISTRIBUTION

The Express Tribune, October 16th, 2016.

Qadeer Tanoli

ISLAMABAD: Huge irregularities worth millions of rupees have been detected in the balance sheet of the Central Zakat Fund, according to an audit report compiled by the Auditor-General of Pakistan for the year 2015-16.

The report has shown that Rs2.112 million was paid as stipend to non-mustahiq (non-deserving) students. During the scrutiny of the record of the Islamabad-based Model Deeni Madrassah, it was observed that Rs2,112,900 had been claimed out of the Zakat Fund as expenditure for mustahiq (deserving) students whose Istehqaq (entitlement) was not conveyed by the chairmen of Local Zakat Committees (LZCs). Documents also showed that signatures of the LZC chairmen were missing from entitlement certificates. According to the report, the expenditure was unjustified and required recovery.

Blaming weak internal controls for the irregularity, the report maintained that it also violated Zakat Disbursement Procedures. The matter was reported to the management on September 13 this year but the Principal Accounting Officer (PAO)/ Department neither submitted any reply nor the Departmental Accounts Committee (DAC) convened a meeting till the finalisation of this report.

The audit report also observed another irregularity in which payment out of Zakat Fund was made to students whose fathers were government servants, resulting in a loss of Rs2.447 million to the government exchequer.

During scrutiny of the accounts of the same Madrassa, it was observed that Rs2,446,800 were paid out of the Zakat Fund to students whose fathers were government servants. Hence, the expenditure was unjustified and required recovery, the audit report recommended.

This matter, the report stated, was also reported to the management on September 13 this year without any concrete result.

The audit report also recommended recovery of the amount in question.

In another development, the audit report detected an irregularity of Rs7.891 million in the purchase of medicines without issuing an open tender. Under PPRA rules, any procurement over Rs100,000 and up to a limit of Rs2 million should at least be advertised on the purchasing authority's website.

Meanwhile, another audit report observed that two hospitals purchased medicines worth Rs7,890,821 between 2010 and 2015 without issuing open tenders in violation of PPRA rules.

Nuclear Medicine Oncology and Radiotherapy Institute (NORI) Islamabad during the period 2010-14 purchased medicines worth Rs4,000,000 from NOORI Patient Welfare Society (NPWS) while the Society for the Advancement of Community, Health Education and Training (SACHET), Islamabad, purchased medicines worth Rs3,890,821 through quotations. The audit report stated that in the absence of open tender the principal of economy could be compromised.

The management of NORI replied that the hospital management had purchased medicines from NPWS as no other entity could compete with the rates offered by NPWS.

The audit report did not deem the reply tenable.

In the meantime, the management of SACHET replied that it followed a pre-approved Internal Control Manual/ Policy for all procurement and would in future follow PPRA rules.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1199746/irregularities-detected-zakat-fund-distribution/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 3RD TO OCTOBER 9TH 2016  
POVERTY ERADICATION UPHILL TASK FOR PAKISTAN, INDIA: WORLD BANK  
Dawn, October 4th, 2016

Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: Statistics released by the World Bank this week show that both India and Pakistan face an uphill task in eradicating poverty, despite Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's claim that Islamabad needs to learn from New Delhi how to fight poverty.

The World Bank report — "Poverty and Shared Prosperity" — places Pakistan among the countries where incomes of the poorest are growing faster than average. The poorest in Pakistan are slightly ahead of the four per cent national growth rate while China tops the list with a more than 8pc growth rate. Sri Lanka is also in this category.

India is placed among the countries where incomes of the poorest are growing slower than average, although it has one of the world's fastest growing economies.

Overall, the statistics show that while in some fields India is doing better than Pakistan, in others Pakistan is ahead.

The data shows that as many as 21.25pc Indians live at or below the World Bank's poverty line of \$1.90 a day compared to 8.3pc in Pakistan.

And 58pc Indians make \$3.10 a day, compared to 45pc in Pakistan.

Although the bank hopes that Bangladesh can overcome its poverty by 2030 if it continued its robust economic reforms, the statistics show that 43.7pc Bangladeshis continue to live at or below \$1.90 while 77.6pc live at \$3.10 a day.

India fares marginally better than Pakistan in life expectancy, which was 68 years in India and 66.1 years in Pakistan in 2014. India has an edge in life expectancy for women too, 69.49 years versus 67.15 years for Pakistan.

India, however, has a clear edge in adult female literacy with 59.2pc in 2011, while for Pakistan it was 41.9pc.

Infant mortality in India declined from 46.3 per 1000 live births in 2010 to 37.9 in 2015, while for Pakistan the comparable figures are 73.5 in 2010 and 65.8 in 2015. This gives a clear advantage to India.

India is better in dealing with undernourishment as well, with 15.2pc of its population undernourished in 2015, compared to 22 per cent in Pakistan.

The World Bank report shows that during 2007 and 2013, Pakistan's annualised growth in mean consumption for the bottom 40pc was 2.81pc, compared to 2.53pc for the total population.

The mean consumption or income per capita, (US dollar per person) for the bottom 40pc was 2.07pc as compared to 3.81pc for the total population.

The data for most recent year shows the annualised growth rate for the bottom 40pc at 2.44pc while it was 4.42pc for the total population.

The data also shows that increased schooling has led to more productive nonfarm activities in Pakistan.

Similarly, conditioning cash support to low income families to children's regular school attendance at school, led to large increases in enrolment (between 11 to 13pc) in Pakistan.

Pakistan is also among the countries where the World Bank study noticed a shift toward declining inequality between 2008 and 2013. In Pakistan, the Gini index, which measures inequality, fell by -2.4 points.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287878>

‘PUBLIC SECTOR FAILS TO PROVIDE BASIC FACILITIES TO MASSES’

Business Recorder, October 04, 2016

Zaheer Abbasi

Qazi Azmat Isa of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has regretted that public sector has failed completely in providing basic facilities to people and the gap between the poor and rich has widened in recent years. Speaking at stakeholders' dialogue on PPAF and SDPU joint report on tracking inequality, he stated the he does not see any serious attempt either on the part of public sector or private to address the growing inequality.

The report analyses the policy and practice recommendations emerging from the “Geography of Poverty in Pakistan – 2008-09 to 2012-13, Distribution, Trends and Explanations” at district level multidimensional poverty in Pakistan and provides policy recommendations and guidelines.

Abid Sulheri of SDPI stated that poverty may be decreasing across the country but inequality gap has been increasing. He said there are quite a few social networks at federal and provincial level and because of not being integrated, these are overlapping each other. PPAF collaborated with the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in 2015 to undertake this study to look into multidimensional poverty in Pakistan at the national, provincial and district levels from 2008-09 to 2012-13.

The findings of the report, meeting of stakeholders was told to show the stark rural-urban, inter-provincial and intra-provincial (district level) inequalities in the levels of poverty. By using four measures of poverty, headcount ratio, extreme poverty, intensity of poverty, and the index of multidimensional poverty, it tracks the change in poverty in districts over the five years.

The report estimates poverty by using 27 indicators pertaining to four dimensions of wellbeing, ie, education, health, living conditions, and assets ownership. There are also stark inter-provincial differences in the incidence of poverty that persist over time.

The highest poverty is found in Balochistan followed by KP and Sindh, whereas the lowest poverty is found in Punjab. In 2012-13, 62.6 per cent population of Balochistan, 39.3 per cent of KP, 37.5 per cent of Sindh, and 24.3 per cent of Punjab was multidimensional poor.

This report also offers some of the potential explanations underlying the differential distribution of various measures of poverty across districts. These include differences in: population density, governance (access to and quality of public services), industrial agglomeration, natural resource endowment, patterns of migration, gender relations, and natural and manmade disasters.

The report makes a strong case for the overall development and poverty reduction policies that need to be prioritised in the districts that have the highest incidence of poverty as well as those that host the largest number of poor. Poverty alleviation strategies and development policies must therefore be contextualised and tailored to address the unique aspects of each cluster as poverty is far more than a paucity of means but rather a poverty of minds, opportunities and freedoms.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/90720/>

## MALNUTRITION: THE HIDDEN MENACE

Amidst the war mongering between India and Pakistan, it is crucial to realise that both countries have a plethora of issues that need to take precedence over futile conflicts. Both countries are faced with wide-spread absolute poverty which afflicts the masses, leading to other alarming issues such as malnourishment, stunted growth and poor sanitation conditions.

It is rather unfortunate that these issues are only discussed when a donor agency publishes an annual report; or some rare conference or seminar on the subject takes place. Even when such spotlight is granted, it is curtailed to a few articles in print media and or sporadic talk shows on television.

A report published recently by the World Bank titled “Poverty and Shared Prosperity” outlines the challenges faced by developing nations which include malnutrition, infant and maternal mortality, female literacy rates, secondary-school enrolments, and access to clean drinking water.

Both India and Pakistan have a long road ahead of them to combat these obstacles; the poorest segments of society of both nations have resigned to their fate. Rather than boosting military expenditures and fanning war rhetoric, both countries need every resource they can muster to bring the masses out of abject poverty and address essential issues such as malnourishment and stunted growth which this column would like to elaborate on.

According to the report, India is better in dealing with under nourishment with 15.2 pc of its population undernourished in 2015, compared to 22 per cent in Pakistan but these are still alarming figures.

However, contrast this with the percentage of people who live at or below the World Bank’s poverty line of \$1.90 a day. The figure is almost 22 percent for India whereas it is 8.3 percent for Pakistan. So, even though the figure for people living in absolute poverty is much lower in Pakistan, the country has performed dismally when it comes to addressing malnourishment.

Malnourishment should be viewed as a threat at par with issues such as terrorism because the scope and range of its effects cannot and should not be understated. Rendering to recent estimates by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 37.5 million or more than 20 percent of the people in Pakistan are not receiving proper nourishment.

Alarmingly, about half of all in children in Pakistan are chronically malnourished also known as stunting whereas 11 percent are acutely malnourished. These children are affected by the lack of protein, iodine and other essential nutrient intake which severely affects their mental and physical growth. In turn, this leads to a crushing impact on the economic development of the country given a majority of the population is rendered useless.

This column will take up the reasons behind malnourishment that are crippling the country in the coming weeks due to paucity of space here. However on a parting note, suffice it to say that a war should be conducted against this menace that is putting the well-being of our current and future generations at stake.

No amount of resources should be spared and advocacy alone cannot change the fates of those affected. Actions will.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/10/05/2-page/799729-news.html>

## BISP BRINGING CHANGE TO LIVES OF MILLIONS: MAMNOON

Dawn, October 7th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Lauding the government's policy to expand the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), President Mamnoon Hussain on Thursday said that it was the biggest social welfare programme in the South Asian region.

Talking to BISP chairperson Marvi Memon, who called on him at the presidency to present the annual report of her organisation, the president said: "BISP has not only become the biggest social welfare programme in South Asia but is also one of the largest and effective programmes in the world which is bringing change to the lives of millions of people across the country."

He noted that over the past three years, the government had placed special emphasis on the expansion of the BISP and improvement in its delivery mechanism. He appreciated that the incumbent government, keeping in view the importance of acquiring education, had invested in the complementary Waseela-e-Taleem (WeT) programme of the BISP to financially support the primary education of children of BISP beneficiaries in order to increase the ratio of school enrolment and retention.

The BISP was launched by the last Pakistan Peoples Party government and named it after PPP former chairperson and ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

President Hussain appreciated BISP for playing a key role for the socio-economic welfare of the poorest of the poor and vulnerable segment of society, particularly its overall mission of empowering women.

He expressed satisfaction that BISP, under the leadership of its chairperson, was working day and night to ensure transparency in its affairs and to enhance the utility of the programme in coordination with all stakeholders.

Mr Hussain expressed his good wishes for the administration, workers and leadership of BISP and hoped that through their efforts the programme would be made further effective for the betterment of the poorest of the poor.

Speaking on the occasion, BISP chairperson Marvi Memon said that BISP provides quarterly stipends to over 5.3 million families and it has successfully achieved all Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) under World Bank, DFID and ADB projects. She further said that the present government had increased the stipend from Rs3,000 to Rs4,834 per quarter and budgetary allocations to Rs115 billion for the year 2016-17.

She said the BISP had initiated Biometric Verification System (BVS) for payments that would be extended to the whole country.

Ms Memon also said resurvey for National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) update had been initiated since June 2016 which would be concluded by March 2017 in two phases.

In a separate development, the president approved financial assistance of more than Rs9 million to 34 artists.

Chairing the fifth meeting of the steering committee of Federal Government Artists Welfare Fund, the president said artists were a national asset who had been rendering great services in art and culture besides promoting soft image of the country.



He said the government was committed to acknowledging the services and contribution of the artists and ensure their welfare during their hour of need.

Mr Hussain said the artists, poets and writers were cultural ambassadors and played a significant role in promoting social and cultural norms of a country.

The meeting was attended, among others, by Attaul Haq Qasmi, Mustafa Qureshi, Muhammad Qavi Khan, Shahid Shafiq, Salman Alvi, Zeba Mohammad Ali, Asghar Nadeem Syed and senior government officials including secretary to the president, secretary Cabinet Division, secretary Ministry of Information, Broadcasting & National Heritage and special secretary finance.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288527/bisp-bringing-change-to-lives-of-millions-mamnoon>

#### FIVE MORE BABIES DIE IN THAR

Dawn, October 7th, 2016

MITHI: Five more children fell victim to diseases caused by malnutrition and other diseases in Thar on Thursday.

The victims were identified as Allah Bux Rind, four-year-old Bebu, three-year-old Ramazanulla Kharik, three-month-old Shoukat Ali Chandio and newborn of Kanji. With the death of five more children, the toll according unofficial sources rose to 408 during the past nine months. But officials at the DHO office told Dawn that 370 children had so far died in six health facilities of the district since January.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz MNA from Thar, Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, in a press statement expressed deep sorrow over the deaths. He also expressed concern over increasing dengue cases in the area.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288477/five-more-babies-die-in-thar>

#### SENATE BODY TOLD: 30PC PEOPLE IN COUNTRY LIVING BELOW POVERTY LINE

Business Recorder, 8 October, 2016

Tahir Amin

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms on Friday revealed that about 30 percent people in the country are living below the poverty line.

To fund social protection effectively, it requires about 3.8 percent of GDP or Rs 1000 billion, said Poverty Alleviation and SDGs Planning Commission Chief Zafar-ul-Hassan while briefing the Senate Special Committee on Marginalized Segment of Society.

The committee met here with Nisar Muhammad in the chair where the Ministry of Planning Development and Reform gave briefing on policy as well as funding for the marginalized segments of society. The committee was also briefed on Vision 2020-2025 of the government relating to the marginalized segments of society.

The chairman said that 30 percent of the population was living below poverty line in the country; however there was no anti-poverty policy in place. The committee members expressed no confidence in the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Bait-ul-Mal etc while saying that people having 50 acres are the beneficiary of BISP while others finding it difficult to get two meals are deprived. They further said that influential people were being entertained in the Bait-ul-Mal.

Ministry officials informed the committee that social protection related literature has been reviewed and draft Social Protection policy framework was developed.

However, social protection has become a major responsibility of provinces after the 18th constitutional amendment and in this regard social protection authority established in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has evolved a policy in

this regard, however, no work has been done in Balochistan on this matter. Work on Draft Social protection policy for Sindh is in progress (likely completion by end October 2016), officials added.

However, the officials said there are some challenges in this regard including identification and exit strategy issues, response, fragmentation of SP initiatives, inefficient and ineffective financial and accounting arrangements, duplication of services/ beneficiaries, governance issues like weak institutional mechanism, lack of political will, lack of reporting mechanisms, roles and responsibilities after devolution.

Ministry officials further said that vulnerable segments will be protected and encouraged by revamping and expanding the social protection system and social safety nets. Article 38 of Constitution of Pakistan would be implemented in letter and spirit. Effective implementation of Plans of Action for Children, promotion of an inclusive education system for special children, enforcement of special quota in education and employment for non-Muslims and persons with special needs, encouraging sports activities for persons with disabilities, judicious utilization of Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal and Zakat funds, eradication of beggary and special schemes for senior citizens to ensure their rights and make them socially and economically productive.

Establishment of a national social protection framework will harmonize federal, provincial and district level policies and programs to remove regional disparities as well as clarify the roles and responsibilities of respective governments. It will develop a range of strategies including prevention, mitigation and coping mechanisms for managing risk and vulnerability. The agreed framework will take a multidimensional approach to social protection, official added.

However, the committee expressed annoyance over the absence of Ministry's senior officials from the meeting including Minister and Secretary as well as on the incomplete presentation.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/10/08/24-page/800854-news.html>

## TOWARDS ZERO HUNGER

Dawn, October 9th, 2016

José Graziano Da Silva

JUST some days ago, on Sept 22, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the UN co-organised along with the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme, the Pathways to Zero Hunger event, which took place on the sidelines of the 71st UN General Assembly session in New York.

The international community, including many influential leaders, had the opportunity not only to reinforce their commitments to achieve zero hunger but also to exchange information, experiences and ideas on the progress already made and the best way forward.

Since its launch in 2012, one of the main contributions of the Zero Hunger Challenge has been raising awareness of the importance of adopting a holistic approach to eradicating not only hunger but also all other forms of malnutrition.

In fact, there was a time when providing food security, addressing nutrition, improving rural livelihoods and promoting sustainable agriculture were viewed as separate tasks, as the responsibility of different actors, and with different purposes.

The Zero Hunger movement has helped the international community to understand that we will not achieve these objectives unless we recognise that they are interdependent, and unless we decide to tackle them together.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goes further and takes the concept of interconnectivity to other areas, based on the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

In fact, achieving zero hunger is also linked to ending extreme poverty, addressing climate change, fighting inequality, building resilience as well as many other aspects.

Over the past years, I had the honour to meet the Minister for National Food Security and Research, Mr Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan, on several occasions during which we discussed ways to continue boosting the National Zero Hunger Programme launched in 2012.

Minister Bosan had visited Brazil in 2014, and he was impressed with the results achieved by the Brazilian Zero Hunger Programme, particularly the link between school meals and the acquisition of food produced by family farmers.

The Zero Hunger strategy, one of the cornerstones of Luiz Inácio ‘Lula’ da Silva’s presidency, brought together a set of programmes that acted on four pillars: facilitating access to adequate food, agriculture support especially for family farmers, income-generating activities and social protection.

This model can also work well for Pakistan. With strong commitments and political will, achieving zero hunger in Pakistan is possible.

For this, the country needs strong political will and an integrated national strategy. It is also important to work close to the beneficiaries, with oversight provided by the communities and civil society. Recent figures estimate that some 30 per cent of the population in Pakistan lives below the poverty line, while 22pc is considered food-insecure.

Population growth is a continuing issue in Pakistan with the current estimate being around 190 million people. As the population continues to increase, concern is mounting on the ability to increase agricultural production in a sustainable way. Agriculture has been challenged by less predictable and more erratic weather swings which are now attributed to the changing climate. Agriculture itself needs to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

FAO has a long history in Pakistan as this country joined it only three weeks after gaining independence in 1947. It is working with the government and communities across the country to support agriculture and food security policy formulation and implementation.

Activities include animal health (foot-and-mouth disease and sheep and goat plague control), marine fisheries assessment for management planning, aquaculture development, irrigation development, small farmer agriculture improvement, climate-smart agriculture farmer field schools, kitchen gardens and women empowerment, amongst others. FAO is also working closely with Fata secretariat to support the resumption of agriculture-based livelihoods for the many thousands of formerly displaced farmers returning to the tribal region.

How to ensure that there are no hungry people in Pakistan is a question to which we must find an answer — and the clock is ticking toward 2030, the year world leaders agreed would be the deadline to reach zero hunger and 16 other sustainable development goals.

Countries acting alone cannot resolve all of the challenges of today. Strong collaboration with other nations, international organisations, NGOs, civil society and the private sector will be key to finding sustainable solutions. And the focus needs to be on the youth of today; with their inquiring minds and access to new technologies and innovations, they will help to lead us to the final goal where we can rightly call ourselves the ‘zero hunger generation’.

This is the right moment to work harder than ever towards these objectives. FAO is committed to supporting efforts which will ultimately lead to a more productive and sustainable future for Pakistan and its people. The time to act is now.

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# November 2016

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 28 TH TO DECEMBER 4TH 2016***

## ***SEVEN MORE INFANTS DIE OF MALNUTRITION IN THAR***

Dawn, November 28th, 2016

MITHI: Seven more infants died of complications from malnutrition at Mithi Civil Hospital on Sunday, raising the death toll to over 439 so far since Jan 1 this year, according to health officials.

Three-year-old Prem Kumar, 10-month-old Safeeruddin, seven-month-old Khenraj, Mubarak Ali, three months; Ali Bajeer, ten days, and two other newborns died at the hospital.

The district health officials told journalists that with the latest deaths, the toll had risen to 439 so far this year while unofficial figures gathered from various independent sources said over 568 kids below five years of age had died so far.

Worried parents attending to their ailing kids complained of indifferent attitude of staff at government hospitals and lack of facilities. Nobody was ready to listen to their woes, they said.

Dr Shaikh Tanweer Ahmed, CEO of the Health and Nutrition Development Society (Hands), urged the government to provide food to pregnant women and basic health facilities in remote areas of the arid region.

“The situation in Thar is fast assuming alarming proportions as according to health officials only in November 40 kids have died so far in government hospitals of the district,” he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299074/seven-more-infants-die-of-malnutrition-in-thar>

## **‘50PC OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE VITAMIN, MINERAL DEFICIENCIES’**

Dawn, December 1st, 2016

ISLAMABAD: As many as 50pc women and children have deficiency of essential vitamin and mineral, besides 45pc deaths of under-five children are attributed to under nutrition.

This was stated by country director, Micronutrient Initiative Pakistan (MIP), Dr Naseer Mohammad Nizamani while speaking at a workshop titled: “Situation of Malnutrition in Pakistan” held at a local hotel on Wednesday.

The event was organised by MIP in collaboration with SUN Civil Society Alliance Pakistan and Black Box Sounds.

“An unhealthy and weak nation will become a liability for the country and a hurdle to the development which will ultimately affects the gross domestic product (GDP) . However, because of current energy crisis, country is facing the loss equal to 1.5pc of the GDP,” Dr Nizamani said.

He said that a large number of children were under weight for their age and they were also not attaining height according to their age which was called stunting.

As the height stops increasing after the age of 18 so those children will never reach the required height.

“Currently main deficiencies in children are that of iodine, vitamin A, iron, folic acid and zinc. Despite a number of efforts we are lagging behind in all the health indicators and even today 36pc women and children have iodine deficiency which affects their mental performance,” he said.

Dr Nizamani said only a balanced diet makes a person healthy. Moreover fortified flour (iron added) should be used, he added.

He suggested that Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) should provide fortified flour to the people to overcome minerals deficiency among them.

Representative of SUN Civil Society Alliance Pakistan Dr Irshad Danish said his organisation was the initiative of the United Nation’s General Secretary and as many as 57 countries including Pakistan were members of the alliance.

“Our investment in nutrition is one of the worst in the world and we are ranked along with the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa,” he said.

Dr Danish said there was a need to stop using tea along with meals because tea stops the digestion of iron in the body.

“Moreover, a recent survey has shown that the required quantity of the vitamins A and D are not available in edible oils in the market. There is need to take up the issue of deficiency of minerals seriously,” he said.

Activist Touseeq Haider said that if one dollar is invested in the nutrition, a country earns \$16 from it as healthy people become able to contribute more in the GDP.

“We need to invest in nutrition because only that is how the progress of the country can be ensured,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299760/50pc-of-women-and-children-have-vitamin-mineral-deficiencies>

## SPECIAL REPORT: MALNUTRITION AND STUNTING IN PAKISTAN: LOSING A GENERATION: THE IMPACT OF MALNUTRITION

Zulfiqar A Bhutta

Globally, nearly half of all deaths (some 2.7 million) annually among children under the age of five are attributable to under-nutrition. Associated with increased risk of morbidity and infections, malnutrition also leads to impaired growth and developmental outcomes. To add, around 159m children under five are stunted with heights much less than normal for that age, and with nearly 240m children at risk of developmental impairment.

Malnutrition is not only confined to children but is also rampant among women of reproductive age suffering from anemia, usually related to iron deficiency as well as wasting among poorer communities that are food insecure.

Maternal malnutrition not only leads to increased risk of mortality among women but also contributes to fetal growth restriction (small size of the baby during pregnancy) that, in turn, multiplies the risk of growth faltering and stunting in childhood. The latter can cause long-term detrimental cognitive, motor and health impairments.

In Pakistan, malnutrition is widespread among all ages, and progress to address social determinants over the last several decades had been very slow. According to the National Nutrition Survey 2011, one-third of all children are underweight, nearly 44pc are stunted, 15pc are wasted, half of them are anemic and almost one-third of these children have iron deficiency anemia.

These rates have hardly changed over two decades according to the findings of a maternal and child nutrition study group published by Lancet in 2013. Notable differences can be found between the nutritional indicators of urban and rural populations; children among the rural and urban poor are at greatest risk.

Among women, 14pc in the reproductive age bracket are thin or wasted (with a body mass index less than 18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) and this prevalence is highest among households that are food insecure. These differences in maternal and child malnutrition are also remarkable among various provinces and sub-regions, and clustered in areas widely recognised as high-risk districts.

The most pervasive and dominant factor underlying maternal and child under-nutrition is widespread poverty and food insecurity. Despite a largely agrarian economy, many rural and urban families live below the poverty line. Periodic or seasonal food insecurity is reported by almost 40-50pc of families in certain provinces, especially in Balochistan, Sindh, South Punjab and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Fata.

These are also compounded by poor and unhygienic living conditions, little access to safe water and adequate sanitation that exposes children to high rates of intestinal infections and diarrhoea. Recent data from a Unicef progress report (2013-2015) on improving access to sanitation in Pakistan suggests that about 58m people (36pc) either defecate in the open or have access to shared toilets. In rural areas, 45pc of the population still practice open defecation.

To improve child nutrition and reduce stunting, it is imperative to focus on other parallel factors including improving maternal nutrition and antenatal care; especially the nutrition of adolescent girls and young mothers.

Low literacy rates especially among women, their lack of empowerment and involvement in decision-making, early marriages, high fertility rates with a lack of birth spacing, and poor access to healthcare facilities are all important determinants of child and maternal malnutrition. Low levels of education, especially awareness of maternal care are also important drivers of under-nutrition largely through improper feeding or dietary practices.

Additionally, a major contributor to childhood malnutrition is the overall poor state of infant and young child feeding. Pakistan is conspicuous for having the lowest rates for the early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding rates and timely initiation of complementary feeding, and the highest rate in the region for bottle-feeding.

Despite the established benefits of early and exclusive breastfeeding, even among the poorest families, work pressure, lack of breastfeeding support and ignorance leads to the administration of alternative fluids such as tea and even animal milk. Data from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2012-2013) suggests that immediate breastfeeding is initiated in 18pc of all births, whereas exclusive breastfeeding is carried out for only 38pc of infants younger than six months.

The promotion and marketing of infant formulas is a recognised barrier for exclusive breastfeeding. Although legislation exists for prohibiting such practices in Pakistan, many hospitals and physicians still breach the code for exclusive breastfeeding. In other instances, inappropriate introduction of formula milk can contribute to excess burden of intestinal infections and malnutrition.

Importantly, the national regulatory and support system does not provide paid maternity leave or breastfeeding support mechanisms for working women to continue exclusive breastfeeding, a factor that has been shown in other countries to be a major barrier to appropriate feeding practices.

After the first six months of a child's life, appropriate complementary feeding of nutritious and safe foods is a cornerstone of adequate childhood nutrition. However, the general lack of awareness of optimal feeding practices and other social taboos and misconceptions (such as the concept of 'hot and cold foods' or inappropriateness of some foods for children, such as meats and fruits) further affects practices. To this must be added measures to prevent common childhood illnesses, such as diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections and improving access to timely and quality care.

A starting point would be recognition that despite better economic conditions and an agrarian population, Pakistan's nutrition indicators and rates of maternal and childhood nutrition progress have fallen way behind others in the region. This is related to lack of focus on implementing quality programs and addressing disparities.

Bringing health and nutrition services closer to women and children and addressing social determinants, such as poverty and lack of women's empowerment would make the difference. Existing poverty alleviation programmes such as social safety nets like Baitul Maal, Zakat programmes or the Benazir Income Support programs have huge potential for reaching those caught in the spiral of food poverty.

Fortunately, Pakistan has an extensive existing lady health workers programme, that, with improvements, can pave the way to reduce these inequalities. An enhanced focus on promoting exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding through mass media campaigns and existing programs should be prioritised.

An effective culturally relevant behavioural change communication strategy must be implemented and sustained. Religious leaders, school teachers and social mobilisers can play an important role in promoting exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding. Healthcare providers must be trained in practices that promote nutrition adequacy for mothers and children, including those that advocate healthy lifestyles, nutrition and physical activity.

Regular monitoring and accountability is critical if Pakistan is to break the logjam for addressing malnutrition. There is a need to ensure regular data on nutrition indicators with more discrete regional or district level information. The situation is ripe for change with greater current emphasis on nutrition and formulation of various national and provincial nutrition focused strategies.

Also, there is need for integrating various different sectors and programs to achieve the desired results effectively and efficiently as many of the determinants and influencing factors are outside the health sector. Policymakers need to recognise the importance of improved child health and nutrition for national development — also a key contributor to achieving Pakistan's sustainable development goals.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299917>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 21ST TO NOVEMBER 27TH 2016

BISP, WFP JOIN HANDS TO FIGHT MALNUTRITION

The Express Tribune, November 22nd, 2016.

Islamabad: In a bid to rid the country of malnutrition, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), World Food Programme (WFP) and Integrated Reproductive Mother Neonatal Child Health Programme and Nutrition Programme Punjab have signed an agreement to launch a research project for the prevention of this health problem.

The agreement was inked by WFP Country Director ad interim Stephen Gluning and BISP Director General Shahid Gul Qureshi in Islamabad.

Under the pilot phase of the project, the beneficiary households under BISP having 6 to 23-month-old children will be provided nutrition supplements by the WFP coupled with communications for change in behaviour in the Rahim Yar Khan district.

The project will be implemented through primary and secondary health departments of Punjab in close coordination with an internationally recognised academic research institute.

A network of lady health visitors will be engaged in social mobilisation for behaviour change communication. The findings of the research will demonstrate the impact of cash transfers when combined with nutrition supplements on the lives of the poorest.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, BISP Chairperson Marvi Memon stated that with 43.7% children stunted and 31.5% underweight in Pakistan, it was a matter of high priority to address the situation at the earliest.

She added that the unconditional cash transfers under BISP were effectively helping the poor in meeting their basic needs, particularly food and health.

According to the second impact evaluation report of the Oxford Policy Management, BISP has resulted in 19% reduction in poverty, 3% decline in poverty gap, 4% fall in malnutrition rates and 71% of the beneficiaries exercising full control over their stipend that has made them financially empowered.

She insisted that results of the research would highlight the best nutrition-sensitive approach that could be replicated all across Pakistan to address malnutrition, stunting and low IQs.

Gluning said the WFP was proud to be part of the initiative as for the first time such a research was being conducted that would provide Pakistan with a great opportunity to use the scientific findings in future policy-making on the social protection programmes.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1238804/improving-health-bisp-wfp-join-hands-fight-malnutrition/>

#### TWO MORE CHILDREN DIED OF MALNUTRITION

Business Recorder, 24 November, 2016

Tharparkar: Two more children died of malnutrition during treatment here on Wednesday after which the death toll during the current month has climbed to 28.

District Health Officer (DHO) Dr Chandar Gormani said that two children aged one year and one-month affected of malnutrition and under treatment at Diplo and Islamkot Hospitals of district Tharparker expired after which the death toll due to malnutrition has risen to 28.

Dr Gormani said that out of 28 children, 11 died of undernourishment and others fall victim to malnutrition related diseases.—INP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/11/24/2-page/820904-news.html>

#### 14 DISTRICTS OF PUNJAB: TEVTA GIVES SECURITY GUARD TRAINING TO UNEMPLOYED YOUTH: CHAIRPERSON

Business Recorder, 26, November 2016

LAHORE: Over 2,000 unemployed youth has got security guard training from Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) Institutes in 14 cities across the province of the Punjab.

This was stated by Chairperson TEVTA Irfan Qaiser Sheikh while addressing the officers at TEVTA Secretariat to start second phase of security guard training program. He also said that certified trained young security guards will get jobs at national and international level. At present mostly security agencies have recruited retired army personnel or untrained youth and they were unable to meet the increasing demands of the security guards. He said now, security companies are contacting TEVTA to offer jobs to trained youth on priority basis.

Irfan Qaiser Sheikh said that TEVTA with the collaboration of Home Department, Police, Civil Defence, Rescue 1122 and Elite Police Training School designed the curricula with the objectives to improve observation, detection and reporting skills, equipped guards with knowledge of handling and firing the weapon, groom the guards and enhance their interpersonal skills and acquainted with new technological advancement in security skills.

He also said new session of this training program will be started from December 19 at TEVTA Institutes in Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Attock, Sheikhpora, Faisalabad, Mianwali, Multan, Sargodha, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rahim Yar Khan in which a group of 2000 youth will be trained.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/11/26/9-page/822237-news.html>



NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 14TH TO NOVEMBER 20TH 2016

MALNOURISHED CHILDREN TO GET FREE FOOD SUPPLEMENTS

Dawn, November 15th, 2016

Ashfaq Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health department has planned to provide free food supplements to children suffering from malnourishment and prevent occurrence of stunting and wasting, highly prevalent in the province.

Officials said that health department was purchasing nutritional food worth Rs42 million through Unicef. They said that the plan was aimed at scaling up nutritional status of children and preventing other ailments caused by malnourishment.

Officials said that a decision to put in place nutritional services at the government-run health facilities was taken in view of the malnourishment among children. Last week, chief minister declared malnutrition as emergency and directed the health department to start giving free services to the population.

“We are procuring nutrition supplements to be given to children and women suffering from malnutrition,” said official.

They said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the only province in the country that declared such kind of emergency and allocated amount to purchase ready-to-use-food (RUTF) and nutritional milk to be given to patients in primary healthcare facilities including rural health centres (RHCs) and basic health units (BHUs).

Officials said that severely malnourished children would be referred to district headquarters hospitals for secondary level complications where they would be admitted to stabilisation centres being established shortly.

“Currently, health department provides nutrition services to children and women in Swabi, Haripur, Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Bannu and Dir Upper with the financial support of DFID and the plan will cover all districts,” they said.

Officials said that the department was also revising the Integrated Health Project to tackle the issue of malnutrition and put brakes on manageable health problems.

The project with an outlay of \$17million seeks to establish 500 sites in all RHCs and selected BHUs to control malnourishment.

In each of the 26 district headquarters hospitals of the province, stabilisation centres will be established to manage malnourished children by giving them food supplements.

Malnutrition occurs among children owing to lack of nutritional requirements that results into wasting and stunting as well low immunity and exposing victims to host of infections.

According to National Nutritional Survey, conducted in 2011, the wasting rate among children below five years of age was 17.3 per cent while 47 per cent suffered from stunting due to non-availability of balanced diet. Prevalence of wasting is acceptable in five per cent population of children and according to World Health Organisation 15 per cent is an emergency level, which needs to be coped with immediately.

Officials said that nutrition was a regular programme of the health department but after declaration of emergency, the donor agencies had also shown interest to safeguard children from avoidable complications. They said that UN and other agencies wanted to support the department in addressing issue of nutrition among children.

Officials said that along with provision of nutritional stuff at the health facilities, the parents, especially mothers, would also be informed about safe hygienic practices to ensure safety of their children. “We need to inform people that they should take care of cleanliness and wash hands before and after eating,” they said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296479/malnourished-children-to-get-free-food-supplements>

## POVERTY IN PAKISTAN DECLINES SIGNIFICANTLY: WB REPORT

Dawn, November 18th, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistanis saw a substantial increase in their welfare, according to the World Bank publication titled ‘Making Growth Matter’.

Statistics released by the bank show that the ownership of motorcycles in the bottom quintile has increased from 2 per cent to 18pc, televisions from 20pc to 36pc and refrigerators from 5pc to 14pc.

Housing quality in the bottom quintile also showed an improvement. The number of homes constructed with bricks or blocks increase while mud (katcha) homes decreased. Homes with flushing toilet almost doubled in the bottom quintile, jumping from 24pc in 2002 to 49pc in 2014.

It is well-known that an increase in income results in households spending less of their budget on food, and more on non-food items. In Pakistan, the 25 percentage point decline in poverty between 2002 and 2014 was associated with a 10 percentage point reduction in the share of expenditure devoted to food.

There was also an increase in dietary diversity for all income groups. For the poorest, the share of expenditure devoted to milk and milk products, chicken, eggs and fish rose, as did the share devoted to vegetables and fruits.

In contrast, the share of cereals and pulses, which provide the cheaper calories, declined steadily between 2002 and 2014. This shift in consumption also increased the amount that people spent per calorie over time. For the poorest quintile, expenditure per calorie increased by over 18pc between 2002 and 2014.

Rural households apparently chose to move away from cheap calorie-dense foods towards more nutritious and lower-calorie foods – and their consumption patterns also became more closely aligned to those of urban households. The government, supported by the World Bank, recently undertook a validation exercise to substantiate the poverty data from the intervening years, identify key shortcomings in the methodology and to lay out the next steps for creating a credible and autonomous system for monitoring poverty and inclusion.

The success, and changing community perceptions of wellbeing, led the government to update its poverty measurement methodology and define a new, more inclusive poverty line.

The new poverty line identifies 29.5pc of the population and 6.8 to 7.6 million households as poor, setting a higher, more inclusive standard for pro-poor policies.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296962/poverty-in-pakistan-declines-significantly-wb-report>

## POOR FOOD SECURITY

Farhan Bokhari

THE findings of a recent global survey which classified Pakistan as a country with a “serious” level of hunger was alarming but not surprising. The International Food Policy Research Institute or IFPRI concluded that 22 per cent of Pakistan’s population was undernourished. Alarming, Pakistan stood at 107 in a ranking of 118 developing countries, giving it a spot not too far ahead of war-shattered Afghanistan at number 111.

As with any research, it is possible to find room for reviewing these numbers for further analysis. But the harsh reality of Pakistan facing one of the worst crises surrounding the matter of food security will remain largely unchanged.

In the past 12 to 18 months, there has been a crash in Pakistan's commodity prices triggered by a combination of globally plummeting commodity prices and internal policy failures. The trend appears to be far more worrying for Pakistan's future than what has been officially acknowledged. Unless Pakistan's more than half-crippled agricultural sector is reshaped through a major set of sweeping reforms, prospects for the future will remain bleak.

The contraction in agriculture across Pakistan during the last financial year has meant that anywhere between 50pc to 60pc of Pakistan's population which relies on farm incomes, was badly hit. Anecdotal evidence from Pakistan's rural belt has suggested a deepening of the crisis as consumer spending significantly contracted. This ranged from accounts of falling investments in farm inputs to farmers staying away from essential periodic investments such as the purchase of tractors and other implements, just to sustain themselves.

Meanwhile, the agriculture policy failure under the present government has been driven mainly by misplaced priorities and a refusal to take badly needed remedial steps.

For instance, the downside of a repeated refusal to devalue the rupee beyond the currency's fall in recent years only made Pakistan's exports — including agricultural exports — less competitive. On the face of it, the choice of defending the exchange rate hardly appears to be based on well-considered and rigorous economic research.

In other areas of macro choices, agricultural policies at the federal and provincial levels remain hostage to a lack of attention by members of the ruling structure. Key areas of central relevance to a farm economy, ranging from the cost of inputs to returns from outputs, remain out of sync with the enormous scale of the challenge.

Government-run 'research' institutes meant to be dedicated to keeping a constant watch on key crops, notably wheat, rice, cotton and sugarcane, appear to have done little ground-breaking work. Instead, farmers have been forced to rely on the more expensive and not necessarily reliable private providers of inputs ranging from seeds, pesticides and other inputs.

And last but not the least, Pakistan's all too well known crisis of governance has naturally hit agriculture too. Again anecdotally, there is widespread evidence suggesting adulteration of pesticides and fertilisers with little hint of a well-organised campaign to curb this menace.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding the scale of the crisis whose consequences will target more than half of Pakistan's population, key elements of the agricultural sector just don't figure among the government's top priorities. The scale of the prevailing crisis is such that the pursuit of large-scale glitzy projects, notably air-conditioned buses and more motorways needs to be halted, at least temporarily. A refocused approach towards tackling short-term ailments followed by long-term steps will just begin to tackle a crisis that has brewed for long and remained unattended.

For the moment, it's possible that the gravity of the crisis surrounding Pakistan's farms has yet to figure on the radar screens of mainstream policymakers. At a time when Pakistan has very recently concluded an IMF loan programme, a sense of comfort prevails all around.

A relative improvement in some of Pakistan's macro numbers such as higher liquid foreign currency reserves and a recovery in economic growth from three years ago, for now may be enough to reinforce this complacency. And yet, such complacency could

easily mask a real-life challenge for more than half of Pakistan's population that is dependent on agricultural incomes. Without ensuring a sufficiently widespread participation of key sectors of the economy, any upturn as recently claimed by the government will remain unconvincing.

Tackling Pakistan's agriculture-related challenge is as fundamental as addressing other vital issues for the economy such as continuing energy shortages. Without successfully tackling such challenges, any economic recovery will simply not be sustainable. Going forward, without a sharp upturn in the performance of Pakistan's agriculture sector, the country lives in danger of being locked in a familiar pattern. There may well be an improvement in Pakistan's economic numbers but will that truly mean prosperity for the bulk of its people?

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297387/poor-food-security>

## UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY: KHURSHEED SHAH LAMENTS SOCIAL DIVIDE BETWEEN ELITE AND POOR KIDS

The Express Tribune, November 20th, 2016.

Sukkur: It is quite disturbing to see that only children from orphanages have taken part in the celebrations while kids belonging to the elite class are not here, said the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Khursheed Ahmed Shah, on Saturday.

He was addressing the audience at an event organised to celebrate Universal Children's Day. The programme was jointly organised by the Sindh government's social welfare department and district support group at Sindh Rural Support Organisation complex in Sukkur. This year, the event was organised under the theme, 'Stop Violence against Children'.

The event should have been celebrated on a larger scale, in which all the children should have participated, said Shah. He expressed concern over the lack of participation from children belonging to affluent families and said that only the poor and needy kids have performed at the event.

Shah said that this is the worst kind of social divide and people should work together to put an end to this. He added that all the babies are born alike, however, later on they become poor or rich, depending on the socio-economic status of their respective families.

Shah further said that the politicians make tall promises when they are campaigning for elections and ask the poor people to vote for them. However, they forget about them soon after winning. "We are habitual of talking about the poor and their problems, but now it's time that our actions should speak louder than our words," he added. Shah admitted that so far, they have failed miserably in bridging the gap between the poor and rich, which is not good.

Speaking on the occasion, Sukkur social welfare deputy director Abdul Qudoos Memon shared the details of a recent survey. According to the survey, he said, sexual violence against children has increased by 7% since 2015, as compared to the data of 2014.

During this period, 3,762 children from across the country were subjected to sexual assault and child marriages. Out of 1,794 boys, 35 were killed after sexual abuse and out of 1,977 girls, 21 were killed after sexual assault, he added. According to Memon, out of the total of 3,762, around 2,616 cases were from Punjab, 638 in Sindh, 167 in Islamabad, 113 in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, 207 in Balochistan and 21 cases were from Azad Kashmir.

Children and students from various institutions, including Pakistan Sweet Home, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi and Riverside Development Organisation, and special children from social welfare department's school performed for the audience. The themes of their performance were children's right to education, better health facilities and nutrition. Later on, books and gifts were distributed among the children by various social welfare organisations.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1236791/universal-childrens-day-khursheed-shah-laments-social-divide-elite-poor-kids/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 7TH TO NOVEMBER 13TH 2016

GOVT CRITICISED FOR PORTRAYING THARIS AS 'BEGGARS'

Dawn, November 7th, 2016

KARACHI: Activists and experts on Sunday spoke at length on the ‘alarming’ environmental situation in Thar in a session of the Sindh Literature Festival (SLF) at the Beach Luxury Hotel in which they criticised the government and the media for ‘portraying’ the people of the rich desert as ‘beggars’ instead of helping them to become resourceful in the event of challenges offered by ‘fast and furious’ development.

“We have been told about some environmental impact assessment reports, which the private parties and government agencies have conducted while mining coal from the desert, but they play ostrich from graver dangers which will soon come to haunt us all,” said Sohail Sangi, veteran journalist.

He said during the times of the British Raj, Thar was divided among various areas keeping the traditions, customs and livelihoods of its people, but now, the present government and the private parties involved in exploring the coal had divided the region into blocks at the cost of the livelihood and social losses of the people.

“Elsewhere,” said Mr Sangi, “You’ll see the companies exploring oil and gas would purchase land directly from the local people with the promise that they would return it back after the exploration ended. But, in Thar, it is the government of Sindh which has purchased the land for private companies from the people.”

“The government has purchased the land at throwaway prices. It has not promised for its return when the mining is completed, neither they have asked the companies to prefer local people in employment and sub-contracts.” He said the grand expedition, which was called the coal mining, would gravely affect the subsoil water level. “And none of the sides involved in the exercise have counted that huge impact, which will cause devastating impact on Thar and the adjoining regions.”

He said whatever was happening in Thar was nothing but a manmade catastrophe for its inhabitants.

“People in hundreds of thousands are being forced to leave their native land. Their houses are being destroyed, their crops are going to disappear, pastures for animals and their fodder are diminishing and forests are getting wiped out,” he said bitterly.

Khalil Kumbhar, an activist from Thar, criticised the media for portraying Thar as the land of droughts. He said hundreds of children died in the region, but the top government functionaries just visited the civil hospital in Mithi. He said children did not die for any other reason but because the livelihoods of their parents were snatched and thick forests were destroyed.

“Many of those who championed for the deaths of our infants, are themselves involved in the business of [cutting] the trees,” he said.

He said Thar’s trees were being cut with impunity by mafias, which, along with several other reasons, impacted on the environment of the desert.

“In a small city of Mithi, you’ll find more than 100 sawmills. Anyone can judge how hard the situation is in Thar,” said Mr Kumbhar.

He asked the government not to throw alms in shape of grains to the people of Thar. Instead, steps should be taken to make Thar resourceful.

He also blamed religious intolerance in the region, populated almost equally by Hindus and Muslims, and held certain extremist groups responsible for harming the religious harmony in the desert.

Arbab Naik Mohammed, a writer from Thar, however, said the religious harmony was still ‘almost intact’ in the region but the impact of tensions between India and Pakistan was visible given the region bordering the two countries.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294728/govt-criticised-for-portraying-thar-as-beggars>

INDIA VERSUS PAKISTAN: A FIGHT TO END POVERTY

Business Recorder, November 07, 2016

Amidst much post-Uri attack sabre-rattling by India a challenge to a war of who ends poverty first by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to his Pakistani counterpart would find a welcome chord with the common man of the two countries.

Modi at a public rally in Calicut city, Kerala, stated on 25th September in his speech post-Uri attack (18th September): “I want to tell Pakistani people; India is ready to fight you. If you have strength, come forward to fight against poverty. Let’s see who wins? Who is able to defeat poverty and illiteracy first, Pakistan or India?”

Nine days later on 4th October, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif responded to this particular challenge during his speech in parliament: “if they (Indian leaders) want us to fight them to end poverty then they should realise that poverty cannot be eradicated by driving tanks on farmlands.”

True, but one would have hoped that Nawaz Sharif had also accepted the Modi challenge to take the lead in ending poverty and come up with proactive measures to reduce poverty in this country. Unfortunately though Nawaz Sharif is a firm believer of the trickle-down theory, or in other words to make the rich richer through fiscal (rising tax revenue through indirect as opposed to direct taxes) and monetary measures (reducing rate of interest for businesses) arguing that the resultant wealth would eventually trickle down to the poor.

At the same time Nawaz Sharif during his three stints in power has focused on building physical as opposed to social infrastructure (which directly targets poverty and illiteracy) – a focus that has not given as many dividends in terms of reduced poverty levels or increase in the total percentage employed (given the high population growth rate) as he had projected.

One can only advise Nawaz Sharif to heed the advice of US Senator Elizabeth Warren (D) “Here we are the richest country on Earth. We have so much going for us, and yet we have a federal government that works great for millionaires.

It works great for billionaires. It works great for giant corporations, for anybody who can hire an army of lobbyists, an army of lawyers, give lots of campaign money... For the rest of America, it’s just not working and it’s time to take that government back and make it work for us...

So, what trickle-down economics was all about was saying to the rich and powerful, the government will help you get richer and more powerful... So starting in 1980 when it was all about ‘fire the cops,’ it was called deregulation, cut taxes for those at the top, which means there was less to invest on education, on infrastructure, on basic research.

So, what’s happened from 1980 to 2012 ... the answer is 90 percent, everybody not the top ten percent, how much of the growth did they get? That GDP kept going up. How much of the income growth did they get? And the answer is zero! None. Not a bit.”

Warren’s tirade is reminiscent of the Sharif’s economic mantra notably the reliance on trickle-down theory, deregulation, low taxes for the rich, no income tax on the rich farmers and opposing the constitutional amendment that would have made it possible to tax the rich farmers, and low interest rates.

And of course an additional component of the Sharif mantra is nepotism in appointments leading to over 700 billion rupee losses in just three years in three state operated behemoths – PIA, PSM and Pakistan railways – requiring budgetary injections.

The inequality adjusted Human Development Index (HDI) for India was 0.425 while for Pakistan the comparable figure was much lower at 0.377. This justifies India’s placement in the Medium Human Development Index countries while Pakistan is placed with low human development index countries by the UNDP.

India scored 0.609 in the HDI index while Pakistan scored 0.538, life expectancy in India was 69.4 while in Pakistan it was lower at 66.6, and gross national income per capita was 5497 for India and 4866 for Pakistan.

However, a comparison between India and Pakistan on the poverty front is perhaps the only area where we can still compete with our belligerent neighbour. Multidimensional Poverty Index (OPHI and UNDP defined) is composed of ten indicators including years of schooling and child enrollment (education); child mortality and nutrition (health); and electricity, flooring, drinking water, sanitation, cooking fuel and assets (standard of living).

Pakistan's MPI was determined at 45.6 percent while an additional 14.9 percent were estimated to live near the poverty level. The breadth of deprivation in Pakistan, the average of deprivation scores experienced by people in multidimensional poverty, was estimated at 52 percent.

In India MPI data revealed that even in states generally perceived as prosperous such as Haryana, Gujarat and Karnataka, more than 40 percent of the population was poor by the new composite measure, while Kerala was the only state in which the poor constituted less than 20 percent. The MPI measure revealed that 55 percent of India is poor, close to double India's much-criticized official poverty figure of 29 percent.

There is an urgent need for the government of Pakistan to focus on social sectors and though these constitute sectors like education and health that have largely been devolved yet the problem is that the Centre is increasingly relying on provincial surpluses, which is at the cost of provincial outlay on social sectors, to enable it to keep its deficit at sustainable levels.

Be that as it may, in recent weeks a politically beleaguered Prime Minister has been announcing (unbudgeted) allocations for building hospitals and schools around the country in jalsas fuelling skepticism as to whether the Treasury can actually release the announced amount and, in the unlikely event that the amount is released, would he staff these institutions on merit or on the basis of political patronage.

To conclude, there is an urgent need for the provinces to focus on social sector development which are the main components of MPI but this would necessitate the federal finance ministry backing down with respect to compelling the provinces to generate huge provincial surpluses every year.

Citing Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) as reflective of the government's effort to alleviate poverty must be seen in perspective: Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms has calculated 30 percent of Pakistanis living below the poverty line that would require 3.8 percent of Gross Domestic Product to fund social protection effectively. This implies an amount of 422,941 million rupees in 2015-16 (3.8 percent of GDP of 11,130,035 million rupees in 2015-16) while total for BISP was only 102,000 million rupees. A lot more needs to be done which would require a revisit of government (federal and provincial) expenditure priorities.

<http://www.brecorder.com/articles-a-letters/187/100617/>

PPAF, FAO SIGN MEMORANDUM ON BALOCHISTAN INITIATIVE

Dawn, November 11th, 2016

QUETTA: The chief executive officer of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Qazi Azmat Isa, and Marcel Stallen of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the Balochistan initiative.

The partnership involves agricultural and livestock interventions, particularly in Qila Saifullah and Kech districts.

A joint mission comprising experts from both organisations has been sent to the two districts to study working models at the field level, identify community needs, assess priorities and plan short-term interventions to pilot test.

Pilot interventions are planned for current Rabi crops for a period of nine months with project activities, including vegetable production in plastic walk-in tunnels, establishment of farmers' field schools for wheat producers, formation and facilitation of farmers associations, all for improved agricultural products.

Qazi Azmat Isa said: “In a mutually beneficial partnership, the FAO is keen on using the PPAF outreach, especially its vast network of community organisations and help farmers’ association look forward to utilising the FAO’s technical expertise around agriculture related sub-sectors.”

The initiative aims at building the strength of these two organisations in remote union councils of Balochistan, where both already have a presence.

The PPAF and the FAO have presence in a number of districts with five most active districts. Their activities are complementary to each other as they strive to mobilise communities through community development.

Following completion of nine-month pilot interventions, outputs and achievements will be showcased before donor agencies. This alliance will also create space for both partners to design and implement future projects from a joint platform where PPAF will bring in community development expertise, while the FAO their technical expertise around agriculture and livestock related sub-sectors.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295600>

## SASTI ROTI SCHEME LOAN GOVT PAYING MILLIONS IN MARK-UP TO BANKS

Dawn November 12th, 2016

LAHORE: The Punjab government is still paying interest to commercial banks for the high-cost loans it had taken for the Sasti Roti scheme years ago. The scheme has been lying closed since 26013.

The bank payments issue surfaced during a meeting of the Punjab Assembly’s Public Accounts Committee (PAC-I) when it took up audit paras pertaining to the food department.

The committee chaired by opposition leader Mian Mehmoodur Rashid was told that millions of rupees were being paid to various banks for around Rs16 billion loan the government had taken for the Sasti Roti project introduced in 2008.

Under the scheme, the subsidized atta (wheat flour) was supplied to 14,500 tandoors and 47 mechanical roti plants for the provision of rotis to the downtrodden at half the market cost (Rs2 per roti against Rs4 market price).

The provincial government had sacked two provincial secretaries, one commissioner and three district coordination officers reportedly for opposing the scheme.

Launched in haste and without any proper monitoring mechanism in place, reports of embezzlement surfaced soon as atta was being supplied to ghost tandoors. There were also complaints that those tandoors were also included in the scheme which were located in posh areas and catering to the well-off customers.

The scheme, which was partially closed during 2010 floods to divert the funds for rehabilitation of flood victims, came to a grinding halt in July 2013. Its closure also caused a heavy loss to the investors who had set up large mechanical tandoors in the hope that the project would continue for years.

When the PAC asked about the bank payments though the scheme had been shutdown years ago, the food department told committee members that only Rs8bn out of total Rs24bn was paid back and for rest of the amount the government was paying interest running into tens of millions of rupees.

Mr Rashid got angry with food secretary Asif Bilal Lodhi when he failed to submit a report about the supply of atta to ghost tandoors.

The secretary sought 45 more days to complete the task with a district-wise report on number of ghost tandoors, their owners and the officials who supplied them the subsidized atta.



<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295833/sasti-roti-scheme-loan-govt-paying-millions-in-mark-up-to-banks>

## WB TO HELP SINDH REDUCE STUNTING, MALNUTRITION

Dawn, November 13th, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank will assist the Sindh government to implement an 'accelerated action plan' for reducing stunting and malnutrition in the province. The project will be supported through a financing of \$63 million, focusing on results over four to five years.

It will target districts where the most vulnerable segments of population live and the stunting rates are above 30 per cent.

The 2014 Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) for Sindh found that 48pc of children under five suffered from stunting.

The plan has the ambitious goals of reducing stunting from 48pc to 30pc by 2021 and to 15pc by 2026 by increasing and expanding coverage of multi-sector interventions proven to reduce stunting in the first five years of life.

It comprises objectives and expects outcomes related to addressing the underlying causes of stunting: health, population, sanitation and hygiene, agriculture, social protection, education and behavioural change.

The government has committed itself to matching every dollar of overseas development aid by \$0.5 domestic financing and has allocated Rs1 billion per year for the next three years through the development budget.

An analysis shows that only about 10pc of the national health budget is spent on nutrition; of this amount, 90pc is financed by development partners in Pakistan, with nutrition-related activities mainly delivered by non-governmental organisations.

Activities supported by development partners in Sindh which contribute to reducing stunting and malnutrition include the World Bank-financed 'Enhanced nutrition for mothers and children'; the recently completed European Union-funded 'Women and children improved nutrition, Sindh,' and the USAID-funded 'Maternal and child nutrition stunting reduction' plans to be implemented by the United Nations Fund for Children and the World Food Programme.

With a contribution from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the Pakistan Partnership for Improved Nutrition (PPIN) — a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank — plans to finance sanitation and hygiene interventions in 13 districts and nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions in four districts.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296026>

## NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 31ST TO NOVEMBER 6TH 2016

### TACKLING ABJECT POVERTY

Business Recorder, 2 November 2016

M Ziauddin

Nobody talks of 'trickle down' any more. They now talk of 'inclusive growth'. In its post-1980 prescription all that Washington Consensus (WC) needed you to do was to get your economies to grow fast enough and the 'trickle down' effect, the WC doctors claimed, from such a growth would take care of the poor in your country i.e., lift them out of the poverty line.

But what really happened and is still happening following this kind of growth since the advent of Reaganomics, however, was something entirely opposite to what this prescription had claimed would happen. Instead of the poor

being lifted out of the poverty line they went further deep down while the rich became filthy rich because the fruits of growth defying the laws of gravity went up rather than down.

Today in most of the countries which had used the WC prescription of growth a handful of rich have cornered almost 99% of the wealth while the rest of the population is holding the empty sack. A recent report by Oxfam and the Lahore University of Management Sciences (Lums) has stated that the concentration of wealth in the richer 20% of Pakistanis is five times more than the bottom 20%.

Inequality and poverty have walked hand in hand in many countries for decades and even centuries – the result of non-inclusive growth models and regressive social policies.

Therefore, the buzz word today is ‘inclusive growth’. But when it comes to spelling out what exactly do they mean by ‘inclusive growth’, most of the Breton Woods officials get tongue tied because any mention of equitable distribution of fruits of growth would immediately turn you into a socialist which is still a blasphemous term in the rich world and among their camp followers.

And if you try to further explain the term in some detail by stating that such a growth would ensure that affordable education, affordable health cover, affordable housing, affordable transport and affordable telecommunication facilities would come within the reach of each and every citizen of the country you would only end up annoying the very ruling elite that has cornered the 99% of the wealth of their countries and do not want the status quo to undergo any change that would threaten their wealth accumulation capacity.

However, even before a country can attempt to attain inclusive growth of a kind in which every citizen is afforded the enabling circumstances to better his/her lot, the poorest of the citizens need to be extended a helping hand to escape their abject destitution and be able to make the most of inclusive growth.

The Bangladeshis tried to do this with a fair degree of success through their world famous Grameen Bank launched by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. In some Latin American countries they tried to do it by distributing land among the landless, getting their ownership registered in government documents and making these lands bankable.

In Pakistan the then official economic managers attempted in 2008 to attack abject poverty in the country through direct cash distribution amongst the most destitute through what is called the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

The long-term objectives of the project was to support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) launched worldwide to eradicate extreme and chronic poverty, to empower women and to achieve universal primary education through the provision of Rs 1000/month to eligible families.

The monthly installment was enhanced to Rs 1200 per month with effect from July 2013 and has now been fixed at Rs 1500 per month since July 2014.

BISP is now the largest single social safety net programme in Pakistan’s history. The number of beneficiaries has increased to approximately nearly 5 million and BISP annual disbursements the government claims are likely to go beyond Rs 90 billion during the current fiscal.

A rigorous evaluation of the BISP is said to be underway. Despite some successes, however, the government finds high rates of malnutrition amongst young girls and boys. The BISP beneficiary households still face significant deprivations in access to adequate sanitation and drinking water. Some limited evidence of improvements to material welfare has been found with an increase in the proportion of BISP beneficiary households that own bicycles.

The BISP appears to be supporting adult male members to shift away from casual labor towards self-employment. The BISP is also said to have increased the proportion of households that own livestock.

The BISP Debit Card accounts could be used to deposit as well as withdraw cash. The potential for the BISP to have an impact on school enrolment has been found to be limited because the average cost of educating a child in a government school would account for 59% of the per adult equivalent value of the transfer.

Given the importance of education in reducing the inter-generational transmission of poverty, it is therefore encouraging that the BISP is also engaging in a Conditional Cash Transfer known as the Waseela-e-Taleem which seeks to provide an additional stipend to children aged 5-12 years, conditional on their attendance at a government school.

However, the BISP should also be cognizant of the range of supply side weaknesses in the education sector in Pakistan such as: shortage of school; shortage of teachers; lack of qualified teachers; missing facilities.

The BISP should carefully take into account supply side considerations in relation to the Waseela-e-Taleem so as not to dilute the expected impact on education of this complementary program and focus on areas in which the education sector has the absorptive capacity to take on new students from BISP beneficiary households.

Research clearly indicates, officials claim, a change in the status of women in beneficiary households, with almost all women interviewed reporting that they are now being given more importance in the household as a direct result of the BISP. Furthermore, we find that the majority of women continue to retain control over the transfer, with 71% of women in 2014 deciding how the cash transfer is spent.

These official claims notwithstanding, one finds it very difficult not to question the program, its implementation and its monitoring system in a country where the population census itself is outdated by nearly 20 years.

Besides, the level of governance, the high incidence of corruption, especially in high places plus the continued practice of the free market economy make it almost impossible to believe that the assistance is reaching the target recipients without at least half of it being siphoned off en-route.

Here it would not be out of place to mention the Brazilian experience of cash distribution among its poorest of the poor and try to learn from this experience.

In the second half of the 20th century, Brazil was one of the most unequal countries in the world, with economists coining expressions such as “Belindia – a society consisting of a tiny Belgium of prosperity in a sea of Indian poverty”. For years, the poorest 60% of the population had only 4% of the wealth, while the richest 20% held 58% of the pie.

In 2003 President Lula launched the innovative Bolsa Família (BF) cash transfer programme, scaling up and coordinating scattered existing initiatives under a powerfully simple concept: trusting poor families with small cash transfers in return for keeping their children in school and attending preventive healthcare visits.

BF was met with considerable scepticism. After all, Brazil had traditionally been a big spender in the social sector, with 22% of GDP spent on education, health, social protection and social security. One of the images used by academics was that throwing money out of a helicopter would be just as efficient to reach the poor, given Brazil’s frustration with the lack of results. How could BF, with about half a percent of GDP, change this bleak scenario?

But ten years of BF helped Brazil to reduce more than halve its extreme poverty – from 9.7 to 4.3% of the population. Most impressively, and in contrast to other countries, income inequality also fell markedly, to a Gini coefficient of 0.527 an impressive 15% decrease. By 2013 BF reached nearly 14 million households – 50 million people or around 1/4 of the population, and is widely seen as a global success story, a reference point for social policy around the world. Equally important, qualitative studies have highlighted how the regular cash transfers from the program have helped promote the dignity and autonomy of the poor. This is particularly true for women, who account for over 90% of the beneficiaries.

Besides this immediate poverty impact, a second key goal of BF was to break the transmission of poverty from parents to children by increasing the opportunities for the new generation through better education and health outcomes.

BF has increased school attendance and grade progression. Poverty invariably casts a long shadow on the next generation, but these results leave no doubt that BF has improved the prospects for generations of children.

At the same time, fears about unintended consequences such as possible reduced work incentives have not materialized. Indeed, increased labor income has been another critical player in the reduction of poverty and inequality in Brazil during this period.

Brazil's experience is showing the way for the rest of the world. Despite its relatively short life, BF has helped stimulate an expansion of conditional cash transfer programs in Latin America and around the world – such programs are now in more than 40 countries.

Surveys conducted by the Federal Government among Bolsa Família's beneficiaries indicate that the money is spent, in order of priority, on food; school supplies; clothing; and shoes. A study conducted by The Federal University of Pernambuco, using sophisticated statistical methods, inferred that 87% of the money is used, by families living in rural areas, to buy food.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/11/02/20-page/811368-news.html>

#### SKILL DEVELOPMENT: GOVT STRIVING TO MAKE YOUTH MORE EMPLOYABLE

The Express Tribune, November 3rd, 2016.

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Labour and Human Resource Raja Ashfaq Sarwar on Wednesday stated that the government is striving hard to impart skills training to the youth in view of foreign and local requirement under the 'Punjab Skills Development Strategy 2018'.

Presiding over a meeting of the skill development committee, at the P&D auditorium, he said that there was a great need and scope to invest in skill programmes supported by the public sector.

Sarwar stressed upon quality training in the technical education & vocational training authority (TEVTA) system, adding that the private sector could be seen as a supporting engine for improving quality of skills training.

He added that a target of training two million youth till 2018 will be successfully achieved through various programmes.

“Capacity building, quality assurance and good governance system have been introduced in all technical training institutes ensuring job placement for skill graduates along with enhancing opportunities for labour export to foreign countries,” Sarwar added.

He said that the Punjab Vocational Training Council, Punjab Skills Development Fund and TEVTA had taken extensive steps to enhance their capacity and were on track to meet their goals for the next six months training programme.

Earlier, the meeting was informed that the TEVTA had taken special initiatives by introducing Chinese language courses offered from native teachers of Qingdao Hengzing University for 12,300 students per year.

Interest-free loans of Rs287.866 million out of Rs500 million had already been disbursed to 5,367 skill graduates through Akhuwat while 1,600 jail prisoners had been imparted skills through 30 training centres in three month courses.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1218975/skill-development-govt-striving-make-youth-employable/>

UGLY KARACHI

Dawn, November 6th, 2016

Arif Hasan

KARACHI is becoming an increasingly anarchic, ugly and divided city — but is loved and glorified by its comparatively well-to-do citizens, public intellectuals and those in search of an identity. Loving Karachi is understandable but glorifying it is questionable.

The city has no research and planning agency — a must for any expanding city. Previously, it had one in the form of the KDA Master Plan Group of Offices. Its garbage cannot be lifted because it has no effective local governance system and the agency responsible cannot even pay its workers on time.

Karachi's infrastructure projects are generally of poor quality; they start crumbling after a couple of years. Most consist of flyovers and underpasses that have failed to solve the city's traffic problems. Its pedestrian bridges are not used as many of them are at the wrong locations. In any case, the old, the sick and women with children cannot use them

For them, there are zebra crossings, but these cannot be accessed as cars do not stop for pedestrians. Traffic rules are not respected and the ensuing chaos results in violence. The option for women to take up a job of their choice, or one they are qualified for, is limited by their dependence on transport availability.

As a result of recently enacted anti-planning laws, Karachi is now 'legally' densifying; the absence of an urban design plan is creating conditions of severe overcrowding. Also, there is no social housing, nor any plans for it. So, unlike previously, an increasing number of families live on the roads and under flyovers.

For the poor, and now also for the lower middle class, needs related to transport, water, land and housing are catered to by an exploitative, unreliable informal sector, while land use is controlled by a powerful developers' lobby through bribes and coercion, devastating the city.

In 1998, 30 per cent of Karachi's primary school students studied at government schools. This dropped to 6pc in 2015. Most of these schools, including the 600-plus KMC ones, are on the verge of collapse. Many of them have more teachers than students. For curative health, the vast majority of Karachiites rely on quacks as there is no comprehensive preventive health plan in place.

Karachi is building upwards and registering more than 900 additional vehicles per day. No serious traffic management and engineering plans are in place to accommodate the increasing numbers. Karachi's firefighting arrangements are also grossly inadequate. Easily manageable fires consume not only buildings but people as well.

The state now has many documentation requirements, including ID cards, B Forms, marriage and divorce certificates and property-related papers. Acquiring these is difficult and time-consuming and so often citizens pay middlemen to facilitate the process. Similarly, acquiring a lease in a notified katchi abadi is only possible by paying the middleman Rs35,000. By paying a bribe you can also purchase a driving licence without passing the test — essentially giving one the licence to kill.

The city has a lot of public space but much of it is not maintained and is often used by drug addicts, for sorting out garbage and for sleeping purposes by the homeless. Karachi has no city museum — a must for schoolchildren if they are to relate to the city as a whole and not just to their environmentally degraded neighbourhoods. Cinemas have also disappeared and the cineplexes are unaffordable for lower-income groups. Most parks require an entrance fee.

Less than one inch of rainfall can flood the city — because elite housing societies continue to encroach on the outfalls to the sea, while informal settlements, for lack of options, continue to build homes on drainage channels. Meanwhile, when it rains, a number of people in low-income settlements die of electrocution. This is accepted as normal.

As if this were not enough, citizens have to put up with political processions and rallies that block traffic for hours on end, because of which children miss school, patients die on the way to hospital, and businesses and citizens not only suffer but feel insulted. The list of woes of lower-income Karachiites is endless.

To deal with what has been mentioned here, Karachi needs much more than political promises and self-serving rallies. One-time events and short-term foreign-funded projects are important but they alone cannot overcome the problems of the city which needs new and effective institutions of governance with strong horizontal linkages.

The constraints to achieving this are many but there is no other option if the city is to be made workable for its majority. And without this, peace, given the aspirations of the younger generation of Karachiites of all classes, will remain a distant dream.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294502/ugly-karachi>

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## December 2016

**NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 26 TH TO JANUARY 1ST 2016**

***CRUSHED DREAMS: 'I DON'T LIKE HERDING BUT WHAT ELSE AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?'***

The Express Tribune, December 26th, 2016.

SUKKUR: Clad in orange shalwar kameez, seven-year-old Zahida Shar stands in the middle of a field with a wooden stick in her hand as she herds goats. "I don't like looking after the goats all day but what else am I supposed to do?" asks the child.

Situated in the outskirts of Sindh's third biggest city, Sukkur, Guhram Shar Ji Wandh village lacks even the most basic facilities such as gas, education and health. The children born in the village end up either as peasants or herdsmen due to the lack of opportunities available to them.

Such is the story of Zahida, who has become an expert at taking care of a big herd of goats. After eating breakfast, she herds her goats to a nearby agricultural field to graze and stays there till evening.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Zahida expressed her desire to go to school but said she was not able to pursue her dream as there is not a single primary school in her village.

The closest school is located in Deha village, which is on the other side of the main Sukkur-Shikarpur Road. The road is clogged with heavy traffic round the clock, therefore the people of Guhram Shar Ji Wandh village are reluctant to send their children there. "It is very difficult for the children to cross the busy road," explained Zahida's uncle, Riaz Shar.

The life of the adults of the village also revolves around pasturing, herding and working on agricultural land.

Zahida said that her mother, along with the other women of the village, works on the agricultural fields while also taking care of her household.

My mother and aunts milk goats, cows and buffaloes, while my father and uncles sell the milk to hotels and households in Sukkur, said the youngster. "Sometimes I also milk goats and drink their milk directly as it tastes very good," she said.

Many other girls her age help their mothers create rallies (patchwork embroidery quilts), she claimed. “[But] I don’t like sitting at home all day stitching little pieces of cloth together. I like to be in open air instead,” she said.

Speaking about life in their village, Zahida’s father Mehar Shar said that the animals belong to other people. “We are just taking care of them and selling their milk on 50% partnership,” he explained.

“We don’t have any civic facilities except for electricity,” lamented Riaz. “We have demanded the construction of a primary school and mosque time and again but nothing has been done,” he said.

Pakistan Peoples Party MPA Haji Ali Anwar Mahar’s Tamachani village is not far from our village but, despite our repeated demands, no school has been established in our village, pointed out Mehar.

“After 10 years of hue and cry, construction of the road to the village has started and it seems that it was initiated because of the upcoming general elections,” he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1274791/crushed-dreams-dont-like-herding-else-supposed/>

#### POVERTY ALLEVIATION TOP PRIORITY OF GOVERNMENT: MARVI

Business Recorder, December 30, 2016

Minister of State and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Marvi Memon has said that poverty alleviation is one of the top priorities of the present regime.

The BISP’s role is important in this regard while the federal government is working on a number of development programs that would bring change in the lives of people, she stated this while talking to Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Vice President Muhammad Nasir Hameed Khan at the Lahore Chamber on Thursday.

Marvi Memon also threw light on the economic growth of the country and also shared many economic milestones achieved by the present government. The BISP is one of the largest social welfare programs around the globe, she said, adding it has achieved within a short span of time what many organizations and programs could not do in decades.

She said that comprehensive conceptual framework of BISP, supported by the state-of-the-art technology and international best practices, makes it the most transparent and credible social safety system, not only in the country but also in the world.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-and-economy/189:pakistan/118339:poverty-alleviation-top-priority-of-government-marvi/?date=2016-12-30>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 19 TH TO DECEMBER 25TH 2016

##### FACES OF ILL HEALTH

Dawn, December 19th, 2016

Hajrah Mumtaz

AS a special report published by this newspaper a fortnight ago pointed out in painful detail, malnutrition and, as a consequence, stunting, wasting and associated health risks are amongst the most serious issues the country currently faces. Indeed, it would not be incorrect to say that we risk losing an entire generation to this, with frightening implications for the future workforce and the associated strain on the already insufficient healthcare infrastructure.

An overview of the grim statistics was provided by Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, founding director of the Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health at the Aga Khan University, Karachi. Quoting the National Nutrition Survey 2011, he pointed out that one-third of all children in Pakistan are underweight, nearly 44pc are stunted and 15pc wasted. On top

of this, half of the young are anaemic, and almost one-third have iron-deficiency anaemia. A maternal and child nutrition study published by Lancet in 2013 shows that these rates have barely changed over the past two decades, with women and children among the rural and urban poor being at greatest risk.

The main reason for this state of affairs, tragically for a country that has a largely agrarian economy, is food insecurity. With millions of rural and urban households eking out an existence below the poverty line, according to Mr Bhutta's research periodic or seasonal food insecurity is reported by up to half of the families in certain areas, particularly in Balochistan, Sindh and southern Punjab, and parts of KP and Fata. The situation is compounded by the lack of access to safe drinking water, unhygienic living conditions, and poor sanitation.

If this is a frightening picture, consider this: it masks another related, even more disturbing, reality concerning food and nutrition issues. Surveys have found a number of children in even food-secure households to medically be categorised as suffering from malnutrition or, on the flip side, having childhood obesity.

In other words, for a mix of reasons, despite getting enough to eat, they are not eating the right combinations of foods for their bodies and brains to grow healthily. The main reason for this is parents' lack of awareness about the nutritional needs of children — women, for they are generally in charge of putting together the menu for their families, and men, for they generally control the family finances and food stocks.

Even anecdotally, on streets across the country, it is easy to see this play out. A hungry child is now more likely to be handed a packet of crisps than a banana, given how, in recent decades, the country has been flooded by an ever-increasing number of brands peddling ever cheaper 'food' that contains very little nutrition. The money available to big business in a globalised world means that aggressive and often misleading advertising campaigns dominate the airwaves and the hoardings, a mix that in a largely uneducated or undereducated population is, quite literally, lethal.

The World Bank's 'Nutrition at a Glance' snapshot of Pakistan, for example, depressingly tells us that only 37pc of infants under six months are exclusively breastfed.

I know several women in the lower income but not poor economic bracket that have been convinced by the aggressive and ubiquitous advertisements that infant formulas, or food supplements — presented as they are of being fortified by all sorts of dietary benefits — are actually better for their children. That this is the prevalent rate despite a continuing but now-on, now-off state-run campaign to promote breastfeeding shows how the advocacy for health is failing to compete with big business.

Similarly, everyone would at some point or the other have seen a child pleading that XYZ brand of factory-made biscuits 'contains real milk', as though that means that it is healthy. And on the other side of the coin, childhood obesity amongst the elites is becoming more common, as poor food choices and the easy affordability of processed foods combine with more sedentary lifestyles to produce ill health.

I once encountered a paediatrician at one of Karachi's priciest hospitals telling a well-to-do and educated couple that over a litre of milk per day for their toddler was absolutely unacceptable. The mother protested: "But milk is healthy!"

Pakistan urgently needs these trends reversed, and the only way to do it is through aggressive and sustained awareness-raising campaigns about human nutritional needs, and the risks associated with processed and junk foods. Further, it may be useful to consider regulating in some way either such food brands' access to the market for children, or the aggressive advertising campaigns they run.

The West has in recent years awoken to the dangers of poor food choices that come at a heavy cost to the health infrastructure. Pakistan can still avoid treading the same path.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1303138>



## INCREASED FARM PRODUCE CAN HELP ALLEVIATE POVERTY, MINISTER TELLS FRESH SAU GRADUATES

Dawn, December 23rd, 2016

HYDERABAD: Sindh Education Minister Jam Mehtab Dahar has said that increased agricultural produce can easily alleviate poverty and boost non-farm employment opportunities.

He was speaking at the 10th convocation of Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam on Thursday. Congratulating the successful students, he said they should not depend only on teachers; they should make efforts to learn from books which were also a great source of learning.

It was a fact that agriculture played a pivotal role in turning the wheel of economic growth of the country, contributing over 20 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The farm sector was a primary supplier of raw material to industry besides improving exports substantially and absorbing 44pc of the total labour force, he said.

He said most economic activities were based on the agriculture sector because agriculture not only ensured food security to the nation but also provided cotton, sugar cane, rice, oil-seed, meat and milk to various agro-based, small- and large-scale industries as raw material.

The minister said agriculture development had a significant impact on rural uplift. He maintained that agriculture faced a lot of problems, which needed to be addressed for a promising future. Climate change, increasing poverty and lack of access of common farmer to agricultural inputs, water-logging, salinity and shortage of water were problems confronting farming communities, he explained.

It was a matter of satisfaction that SAU being the only agriculture university in Sindh was progressing satisfactorily. He highlighted significant improvements in the university like increase in PhD ratio by 50pc among faculty members, award of maximum number of PhDs (18) in one year, publication of maximum number of research papers, undertaking of research projects with national and internal funding, development of constituent college in Khairpur, approval of a university campus by the Higher Education Commission in Umerkot etc.

The SAU conferred academic degrees on 350 graduates at the convocation. Two PhD scholars and 57 postgraduates received degrees at the event while 24 medals were awarded to the best students of different faculties, departments, disciplines and in extra-curricular activities.

Vice-Chancellor Dr Mujeebuddin Sahrai said that in the past few years, SAU pursued policies to enhance student enrolment, improve quality of degree programmes, pursue human resource development for faculty members, focus on problem-oriented research and development programmes and to establish effective linkages with stakeholders. He said student enrolment had improved whereby the SAU had current enrolment of 6,613 students (including eight per cent girl students).

He said annual intake of students in undergraduate programmes was about 1,500 and in postgraduate degree programmes, it was about 500. He said it was a matter of honour for him to inform that PhD admissions had increased from 45 during 2014 to 97 in 2015, he said. Faculty strength of the SAU was 254 and out of those faculty members, over 50pc were PhD degree holders, which was the maximum ratio of PhDs in the history of SAU since its inception in 1977.

He said SAU focused on human resource development to increase PhD faculty strength to at least 60pc in the next three to four years. He said SAU had awarded 42 PhD scholarships under HEC-sponsored project 'Strengthening and Development of the SAU Tandojam' and of them 27 successfully completed their PhDs.

He said SAU was now implementing two dozen research projects with total budgetary provision of over Rs80m while share of international funding was about 25pc for research and development. Over one dozen projects, amounting to

Rs60m, were in pipeline and awaited approval of sponsoring agencies. Similarly, the number of research publications of the university's faculty in HEC-recognised journals had increased, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1303898>

**NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 12 TH TO DECEMBER 18TH 2016**

**MORE EFFECTIVE STEPS NEEDED TO REDRESS MALNUTRITION ISSUES**

Business Recorder, December, 14, 2016

FAISALABAD: Agricultural scientists and experts have pointed out that plenty of food/high caloric intakes, dependence on impure and processed foods, environmental pollutions were posing serious disease threat to the people.

Speakers also called for addressing the issue of malnutrition to ensure the nutrition security with the adoption of healthy lifestyle, food safety measures and food diversification.

They were addressing a seminar on 'Research methods in nutrition', arranged by National Institute of Food Sciences and Technology, Faculty of Food Sciences, University of Agriculture Faisalabad(UAF).

Dr Anwar-ul-Hassan Gilani said that changing lifestyle, junk food, unphysical activities, over-eating and obesity were the root cause of many diseases. He stressed upon the natural health which is the best maintained by lifestyle change, including physical exercise and mental relaxation; nutritional measures/dietary habits and functional and organic foods.

He said that the tangible steps were needed to address the issue at the national level.

Prof Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan said that the country was producing the surplus food for the people. But on the other hand, 40 percent of our women and children were malnourished. He said that lack of awareness, affordability issue, unhealthy lifestyle and other factors were provoking malnutrition in the country. He said that in the late ninetieth century, the region of subcontinent was facing famine and extreme hunger situation.

On the recommendations of Famine Commission, the canal system was developed that turned the barren land into fertile land. He said that on the recommendation of that commission, the Punjab Agricultural Education and Research Institute (now UAF) was established and now we have abundant food.

He showed his concern that the food inspectors and school nutritionist must be qualified in the relevant discipline. He said that now, manpower was being taken from other disciplines that are not skilled to meet the challenges. He called for diversification in food as our food depends over wheat.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/12/14/5-page/827604-news.html>

**GOVERNMENTS PLEDGE \$75 BILLION TO WORLD BANK'S POOREST COUNTRIES FUND**

The Express Tribune, December 16th, 2016.

Washington: 48 governments have ratcheted up the fight against extreme poverty by committing \$75 billion in new funds to the International Development Association, the bank's fund for the poorest countries, said the World Bank on Thursday.

The replenishment will enable IDA to scale up development interventions to tackle conflict, fragility and violence, forced displacement, climate change and gender inequality, the World Bank said. It also will help promote better governance and institution building and economic development, areas that the World Bank has targeted for the next three years.

“This is a pivotal step in the movement to end extreme poverty,” World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim said in a statement. “The commitments made by our partners, combined with IDA’s innovations to crowd in the private sector and raise funds from capital markets, will transform the development trajectory of the world’s poorest countries.”

The World Bank said the latest replenishment, which runs from July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020, will support health and nutrition services for up to 400 million people, water improvements for up to 45 million people and safe childbirth for up to 11 million women.

It also will provide immunisations for 130 million to 180 million children, increased access to financial services and an additional 5 giga watts of renewable energy generation capacity, the bank said. To finance the ground-breaking package, IDA for the first time is seeking to raise funds through debt markets alongside donor contributions with internal resources and donor contributions.

A total of 48 governments pledged to contribute resources to IDA at a meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, while additional governments are expected to pledge resources in the near term, the World Bank said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1264631/governments-pledge-75-billion-world-banks-poorest-countries-fund/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 5 TH TO DECEMBER 11TH 2016

‘29.5 PC OF THE POPULATION LIVES BELOW POVERTY LINE’

Dawn, December 5th, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: About 29.5pc of Pakistan’s population lives below the poverty line, says a document submitted in the National Assembly by the Ministry of Planning and Development.

The document was submitted in reply to a question asked by PTI MNA Nafeesa Khattak who had asked for the number of people living below poverty line and the definition of the poverty line.

The ministry had replied that according to the latest estimates based on the Cost Basic Needs (CBN) 2013-14, using the Household Integrated Economic Survey data, 29.5pc of the population lives below the poverty line which translates to approximately 55 million people.

According to the submitted document, the latest method uses CBN, which looks at a minimum consumption bundle consisting of food and non-food essential consumables necessary to live.

“Pakistan’s poverty line using CBN method and monetizing the consumption bundle of 2350 kcal is set up at Rs3,030 per adult equivalent per month. If a person’s earning is less than Rs3,030 per month, he/she is below the poverty line,” the document says.

However, Sustainable Development Policy Institute Executive Director Dr AQ Suleri said the definition of the poverty line in the document submitted in the National Assembly defined fewer people as living under the line of poverty.

Talking to Dawn, he said that the document had defined those earning more than \$1 per day as being above the poverty line.

“However, according to international standards, those who earn between \$1.75 and \$2 are considered to be living above the poverty line. So, if we follow international standards, if a person earns over Rs5,000 he will be living above the poverty line,” said, adding that if international standards were being followed, the number of people defined as living under the line of poverty will double.

Talking to Dawn, a representative of the SUN Civil Society Alliance Pakistan, Dr Irshad Danish said the use of the intake of calories as a method produces varying results.

The alliance is an initiative of the UN secretary general of which 57 countries including Pakistan are members and which works on nutrition levels.

“Our children need micro nutrients and they become stunted because they do not have a nutritious diet,” he said.

Quoting the cost of diet analysis which was conducted by the ministry of planning and the WFP and which was released two months ago, Dr Danish said 69pc of the country’s population is food insecure.

“Bread makes for the larger portion of most people’s diet. They do not eat meats, fruits and dairy products. In other words, they do not get a balanced diet and therefore, they cannot be called healthy,” he said.

People in Pakistan are also eating wheat which is infected with bacteria, which has a negative effect on their health, he said.

Almost half the women and children in the country suffer from various deficiencies related to the lack of vitamins and minerals in their diet and 45pc of deaths in children under five years of age are attributed to the lack of nutrition.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300512/295pc-of-the-population-lives-below-poverty-line>

## GOVT TO PREPARE ‘ZERO HUNGER’ PILOT PROJECT

Dawn, December 5th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The government is formulating a pilot project of the National Zero Hunger and Family Farming Programme, which will be implemented in the most food-insecure areas.

A specially established National Zero Hunger Cell in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research has been tasked with preparing the pilot project before launching the National Zero Hunger Programme.

Official sources said that in order to initiate the process of preparation of the pilot programme, a national mapping exercise was jointly undertaken by the World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Organisation and the

ministry to gain better understanding of ongoing programmes relating to school feeding, nutrition support, income generation and family farming support.

The sources said that during the mapping exercise it was agreed that the provinces would be consulted before the finalisation of the programme.

The programme will be implemented in the most food-insecure areas in each of the provinces in coordination with the provincial governments.

The pilot project will help analyse effects of the proposed intervention in each province and to incorporate lessons and experiences gathered into a more comprehensive programme.

Answering a question regarding levels of hunger and malnutrition in the country, the sources said the last National Nutrition Survey was conducted by the Aga Khan University’s Division of Women and Child Health, the health ministry and the United Nations Children’s Fund (Unicef).

The Ministry of National Health Services is also planning to conduct a National Nutrition Survey in 2017-18 by which the latest information will be available.

During the past three years, food items like wheat, rice, maize, potatoes, onion, mango, citrus, palm dates, milk and meat were produced in surplus in the country.

The sources said that for revitalisation of the agriculture sector, the federal government had taken steps such as the Prime Minister's Kissan Package which gives concessions in taxes and duties to farmers with reduction in prices of fertiliser, enhancement in the target of agriculture credit and other concessions.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300588>

## STUNTING CHALLENGE

Dawn, December 5th, 2016

WITH nearly 44pc of children in Pakistan stunted, a sustained approach to ending malnutrition, as opposed to applying quick-fix solutions, has become critical. Indeed, the global sustainable development agenda has plugged stunting as a 'new' health threat, a catastrophe calling for humanitarian action targeted at poor communities. It would be an achievement if malnutrition were to be reduced by donor aid, but as the chasm of health inequality between the rich and poor widens such an intervention by itself is not sufficient.

The perception of donor-driven solutions working miracles is problematic given that malnutrition is linked with the related determinants of maternal health, social status, child marriage, educational access, gender empowerment, etc. A recent report in this paper recommended support for long-term health and education programmes — incorporated within current social protection programmes — in order to improve human capital.

Only when provincial governments adopt nutrition as a political priority, thereby linking health and food programmes with poverty alleviation, will the incidence of stunting come down. Consider how the Peruvian model decreased stunting by targeting families through the provision of conditional cash transfers to pregnant women, food distribution and educating mothers to stimulate their children mentally. It didn't matter who was in power because nutrition as a political priority was overseen by the office of the prime minister.

With widespread poverty, health-sector programmes depend on international agencies that usually disburse aid with strings attached, limiting the scope and benefit of such assistance. Interim, simplistic solutions will not end malnutrition unless resilient systems are built within vulnerable communities to mitigate the effects of inequality and poverty — and equitable policies and related infrastructure are instituted.

The government should realise that shifting global politics drives donors to prioritise agendas. So it is best to manage existing funds effectively to bridge health gaps rather than allow them to lapse. Meanwhile, with international donors driving the discourse on stunting while working with provincial governments as best as is possible, there is scant evidence of intra-governmental coordination in the health sector or of implementation of any multisectoral plans.

Moreover, it appears that the government has no plans to redress stunting rates that could result in substantial losses to the economy. In the long term, it is only cost-effective solutions and proper budgeting with monitoring and accountability factored into national programmes that will reduce malnutrition in the country.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300539>

## AS POPULATION GROWS, KATCHI ABADIS IN KARACHI SHRINK

The Express Tribune, December 11th, 2016.

KARACHI: Mothers living in apartments in katchi abadis think that if their children are not at home, they are at ease, said urban planner Arif Hasan. This is because the densification in such areas is at an all time high, he claimed.

He was speaking on ‘Urbanisation Trends in South Asia: The Case of Karachi’ at the first session of the Fourth International Karachi Conference on Saturday. According to Hasan, smaller units are being constructed, which are affordable for people living in such settlements, where six to 10 persons can reside in a single room.

No Sindh Building Control Authority rules or regulations are followed in such constructions. In such housing schemes, he said that there is freedom to stay away from home for the children and one of the main issues is of toilets, for which, he said that the House Building Finance Company Limited has started giving specific loans.

#### Issue of migration

In Karachi, he said that there has been unprecedented growth in the population from 1991 to 2015. Earlier, according to him, from 1951 to the 80s, people from stable societies, which had a functioning community systems of governance, migrated to Karachi. However, for the present migration, he said that people are coming from societies where communities’ governance systems have collapsed .

The village today is entirely dependent on urban produced goods, which the poor cannot afford, and thus, he said that migration remains the only option. “The population has increased by 600% since 1943, which the village economy cannot absorb,” Hasan explained.

The new low-income migrants, he said are coming to an unwelcoming city where no social housing or regularisation of new settlements is promoted, unlike before. The housing demand in Karachi, according to Hasan, is 120,000 units per year, whereas the formal sector housing supply – on average over the last five years – is 42,000 units per year and accommodation in katchi abadis is only 32,000 units per year. “The remaining accommodation is done through densification of existing homes and by increasingly squatting on pavements, under bridges and flyovers and open spaces. This did not happen before,” he said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1259604/karachi-conference-population-grows-katchi-abadis-shrink/>

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