

## January 2018

### **NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 29TH TO FEBRUARY 4TH 2017**

#### **EU-FUNDED PROGRAMME FOR NUTRITION LAUNCHED**

The Express Tribune 31 January 2018

A European Union (EU)-funded project, Programme for Improved Nutrition in Sindh

(PINS), was launched on Wednesday by Chief Minister (CM) Murad Ali Shah at a ceremony held at a local hotel.

PINS is a four-year programme which has been designed to sustainably improve the nutritional status of children under five years and pregnant and lactating women in 10 districts of the province, including Shikarpur, Thatta, Kamber-Shahdadkot, Larkana, Dadu, Jamshoro, Matiari, Sujawal, Tando Allahyar and Tando Muhammad Khan.

Addressing the ceremony, the CM thanked EU and other development partners for cooperating with the Sindh government in various initiatives, including the nutrition programme.

“It saddens me to say that more than 48% of the children in Sindh suffer from stunting [low height] and around 15% are acutely malnourished,” Shah said, adding that the government was addressing malnutrition as its top priority.

The CM informed the ceremony that the Sindh government, with the technical support of World Bank, had prepared an action plan, Sehatmand Sindh, for reduction of stunting and malnutrition in the province. The project’s duration was five years and it would incur Rs67.79 billion. “This plan is fortified and complemented by a variety of interventions,” the CM said, adding that one of such interventions was Rs4.11 billion Nutrition Support Programme which was being implemented in nine districts of the province with the assistance of World Bank.

Shah went on to say that with the support of the United States Agency for International Development, various projects would be implemented in the province for reducing stunting. He added that World Food Programme was also a committed partner of the Sindh government and it was playing a commendable role in addressing malnutrition among children and women through a \$48 million programme.

The recently completed EU-funded project, Women and Children Improved Nutrition Sindh (WINS), also played a pivotal role in improving nutrition status in four districts, the CM said.

Commenting on PINS, the CM said it would cover 10 districts of the province with an estimated outlay of €68.25 million out of which the EU had pledged a sum of €60 million.

“Disadvantaged and marginalised segments of society in Sindh owe a great responsibility to all of us,” Shah said, adding that such segments could not afford nutritional food. “With collective efforts, we can turn the tide,” he said.

“The clock is ticking and I am sure that with the participation of development partners, we can succeed in bringing about a positive change in the current state of affairs,” the CM said.

Later, talking to the media after the ceremony, the CM said the provincial government had constituted an inquiry committee to probe allegations against former Malir SSP Rao Anwar. After the committee presented its report, the government took action on its recommendations in true letter and spirit, he added.

Responding to a question, the CM said he did not know where SSP Anwar was hiding. However, he remarked, “No accused is more powerful than the law”. The police were working hard to arrest SSP Anwar and all other provincial governments and agencies had been requested to help in his arrest, Shah said.

## BISP'S INITIATIVE: WASEELA-E-TALEEM EXPANDED TO 50 DISTRICTS

The Express Tribune, February 1, 2018

Sehrish Wasif

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Wednesday inaugurated the expansion of 'Waseela-e-Taleem' programme which focuses on enrollment and retention of primary school going children in 50 districts across Pakistan.

The education initiative is a part of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). Under the programme, each beneficiary child receives a cash transfer of Rs750 per quarter on conditional completion of 70 per cent attendance in schools in 32 districts across the four provinces and Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The programme is being extended to 50 districts and hopes to add another one million children to the current enrollment of 1.9 million.

The inauguration was held at the BISP headquarters and was attended by Minister of State and Chairperson BISP MNA Marvi Memon, BISP Secretary Omar Hamid Khan, ministers, diplomats, World Bank Country Representative Ilango Patchamuthu, DFID Country Head Joanna Reid, BISP beneficiaries and primary schoolchildren and students from Roots International.

Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Abbasi said, "Education is the key to a nation's progress and development and country cannot move ahead without a well-educated and fully-trained human resources."

He said a child without education is a burden on society and "the nation and parents need to play their critical role in ensuring that their children do not drop out".

He said the BISP programme for the poorest segments of society is totally non-political in nature and extended beyond provincial boundaries. "It empowers women and focuses on her critical role in sending her children to school and not to work," he said.

The PM asked the participants from 32 districts of the country, particularly the women, to ensure that there was no child in their neighbourhoods that was deprived of education.

He said the government was committed to the provision of education for all as it believed that without education, society would not be able to fight the ills of extremism and terrorism.

Abbasi was appreciative of the role of the BISP and its partners, the World Bank and the Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK, for helping the country achieve its target of universal education for all, under the Millennium Development Goals.

He said the government needed to do more for education. He said despite education being a provincial subject, the federal government was obligated to provide guidance and vision to ensure 100 per cent enrollment, retention, and graduation.

The PM was optimistic that the target of adding another one million children to the already-enrolled 1.9 million would be achieved. He, however, asked the BISP to ensure that quality education was imparted to children under the programme.

BISP Chairperson Memon lauded the vision of PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif and said the programme had gradually enhanced scope from Rs40 billion annually to Rs121 billion and would further expand in the days ahead.

She was appreciative of her team for their hard work and for making the various initiatives undertaken, a success. She also assured the prime minister that the BISP would achieve further milestones in the days to come.

DFID Country Head Joanna Reid said the UK had been partners with Pakistan in its progress and development for the past 70 years and committed to making it prosperous. She noted the strong and sustainable social network in the form of 60,000 BISP Beneficiary Committees (BBCs) initiated by the BISP and said the UK was particularly pleased to be part of the Waseela-e-Taleem programme in which about half of children are girls.

World Bank Country Head Illango Patchamuthu termed the Waseela-e-Taleem as a flagship safety net programme and said it was amongst the top-rated such programs in the world. He stressed continued good governance to ensure the success of the programme and said the World Bank would continue to extend support to the BISP.

The BISP secretary, in his welcome remarks, said that the BISP was extending support to 5.4 million families and was spending Rs121 billion per annum. He shared the achievements of the Waseela-e-Taleem programme and added that the conditional cash transfer would help add more children to schools. He also thanked the development partners for their contribution to making the Waseela-e-Taleem programme a success.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1623420/1-bisps-initiative-waseela-e-taleem-expanded-50-districts>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 22ND TO JANUARY 28TH 2017

WHY POVERTY HASN'T REDUCED SIGNIFICANTLY IN PAKISTAN

The Express Tribune, January 22nd, 2018.

Poverty is one of the least discussed issues in Pakistan. While many debates centre around different economic issues, poverty is mostly left out. It is quite odd that local discourse on such a serious issue is very elusive in our country.

Successive governments in Pakistan have also intentionally shied away from this debate. For example, the Pakistan Peoples Party government didn't release poverty statistics for years it stayed in government.

Similarly, the PML-N hasn't released poverty rates for its tenure. The poverty rate announced in 2016 by then Minister of Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal was for the year 2013 when PML-N was voted into power. Clearly, political parties don't intend to land in hot water by talking about poverty.

Academic studies on the subject further confound our understanding of poverty. There is considerable ambiguity around the methodology to estimate the rate of poverty. As a result, there is no single and well-accepted poverty rate in Pakistan. Each academic study on poverty estimation gives its own poverty rate that may be different from others. In some cases, there are significant differences between the calculated poverty rates.

However, according to the latest available official statistics, almost 30% of Pakistanis were living below poverty line of Rs3,030 per adult per month in 2013. This translates to roughly 59 million in absolute terms. The poverty line used by the government is totally absurd. How can we consider an adult as not poor who earns Rs3,030 per month? This casts serious doubts on the poverty rate reported by the government.

A more reasonable poverty line can be the international poverty line of \$2 per day. As per this poverty line, a whopping 60% of Pakistanis are poor. Now another type of poverty rate called multidimensional poverty rate is also being calculated in Pakistan, which relies on non-income indicators. Here again, not many are aware of what is multidimensional poverty.

But poverty is the main reason why international development institutions like the World Bank finance variety of projects in Pakistan.

Pakistan has received millions of dollars in the name of poverty reduction. Varieties of economic policies are framed by the government under the pretext of poverty reduction.

Despite the fact that Pakistan has received a lot of money for fighting poverty from donor institutions; it hasn't seen significant reduction in poverty levels. This is especially true when comparison is made with India and China. Both of these economies have experienced steep fall in their poverty levels. Pakistan's progress in this area has been sluggish as best.

From 1951 till now, there hasn't been a year when a government-led poverty reduction program wasn't under way. The initial programmes were completely donor funded with focus on education and health of the rural economy. Overtime, some programmes under public-private partnership mode also started with a more varied focus like housing, roads, and sanitation.

In addition, government also adopted redistribution policies like land reforms, pricing of agricultural products, subsidies, social security payments, high tax rates and direct income transfers.

In the last few years, redistributive policies have become more popular with both people and the political parties. This shift in policy is influenced by a stream of literature which purports that poverty reduction can only be achieved if inequality is reduced using redistributive policies. Many local studies on poverty have also come up with the same idea.

Such policies place the government at the centre of the effort to redistribute economic gains to reduce poverty.

Focusing too much on programmes and redistributive policies has done more harm than good. Almost all of the programmes have fallen prey to government failure and corruption. The most recent example is that of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). Stories of corruption in BISP are common knowledge. The problem is that whenever a programme lands into political hands, political considerations always precede sound economic sense.

The BISP forms were given to PPP MNAs for distribution and naturally, those with strong political connections ended up having it over genuine individuals. Although it must be admitted that programmes run in collaboration with the private sector seem to produce better results than those run exclusively under the government's watch.

On the other hand, the redistributive policies adversely affect the pricing mechanism. Support prices of key agriculture commodities creates glut-like situation which wipe out economic profits. Along with this, increasing tax rates on corporations in order to pay for welfare programs discourages businesses.

It won't be wrong to conclude that government's policies have stunted the impact of economic growth to reduce poverty significantly.

If Pakistan is to reduce poverty significantly, it must promote employment opportunities. The surest way to achieve that is by allowing businesses to employ more people. This can only be achieved if predatory redistributive policies are withdrawn.

The writer is a researcher and works in the development sector of Gilgit  
<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1614607/2-poverty-hasnt-reduced-significantly-pakistan/>

THE POVERTY ELEPHANT

The Express Tribune, January 23rd, 2018.

Undiscussed elephants in the room do not get much bigger than that labelled poverty. No government of the last three decades has been willing or perhaps more importantly able, to put a figure on the numbers of people living in poverty

in Pakistan. Part of the problem has to do with complexity and the shifting nature of poverty — it is a shape-changing moving target.

Poverty is constantly evolving and it is today recognised as being multidimensional — a family of elephants of different sizes with some permanently resident and others transient, in the room periodically. That said it does not excuse this or any government the task, indeed duty and responsibility, of quantifying and objectifying poverty in its many manifestations.

The last time there was anything close to a government-driven evaluation and enumeration was in 2016 when figures for 2013 were released. They were based on a poverty bottom line of Rs3,030 per month (\$27.41 at current exchange rates) translating into around 59 million out of a population that then was estimated (pre-census) as about 190m. Broken down that is about 90 cents US a day and clearly unsustainable. International poverty lines are generally closer to \$2 per day which when laid across today's population indicates that 60 per cent of Pakistanis are poor.

Most of the aid received by Pakistan is in some ways designed to reduce poverty, yet there is scant evidence that it has done so, and government policies are at least nominally designed to reduce or alleviate policy yet with few exceptions they do not. Similar poverty reduction activity in India and China has both seen dramatic declines in levels of real poverty.

Today in Pakistan the focus is on redistributive policies that aim to reduce inequality, but this is doing more harm than good opine some analysts as good intent falls afoul of poor governance and corruption and seemingly without exception poverty-reduction initiatives die a death whenever a programme falls into political hands.

Those run in collaboration with the private sector seem to fare better. The real key to poverty reduction is employment, and who holds the key to more jobs?

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1615249/6-the-poverty-elephant/>

**BISP TO LAUNCH CHILD PROTECTION CAMPAIGN TODAY**

Dawn, January 27th, 2018

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of child abuse cases in the country, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has decided to launch a countrywide campaign on Saturday (today) to raise awareness about various aspects of child protection — including the role of parents, teachers, leaders, guardians and responsible members of civil society.

According to officials, the BISP child protection campaign will be helpful in creating an environment which ensures that a child's physical, social and psychological needs are fulfilled so that they grow into healthy and contributing members of society. They hope that this will ultimately result in a child friendly society.

They also plan on setting up a hotline and call centre as part of the campaign to receive complaints of abuse against children and direct them to relevant agencies.

The campaign will be launched at BISP headquarters in Islamabad along with their district and tehsil offices across the country.

According to BISP officials, the campaign has been planned with the concept of social responsibility and envisaging a call to action from all segments of society.

It will include gatherings in 40 districts which will be led by parliamentarians who will initiate the campaign in their constituencies. The campaign will proceed towards a pledge for the protection of children from all stakeholders.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1385577/bisp-to-launch-child-protection-campaign-toda>

Dr Hafiz A Pasha

The provisional figures for the whole year, 2016-17, and for the first quarter of 2017-18 of public spending on pro-poor expenditure have become available. These estimates are made by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) Secretariat of the Federal Ministry of Finance and include the spending by both the federal and provincial governments.

The PRSP Secretariat has made a major effort at collecting the relevant data and putting together the head wise expenditure, both current and development. This process have been on-going quarterly and annually since 2002. There is a need to appreciate and commend these efforts.

A very broad view has been taken of expenditures which are considered to be pro-poor by the Secretariat. There are, in fact, four categories of the expenditure included. First, there are income supplements, like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), which are exclusively targeted to the households below the poverty line. Also included in this category are subsidies which involve price reduction on goods and services consumed by the poor. A prime example of this is the large subsidy offered to small electricity consumers. In addition, there is also a subsidy in the procurement of wheat.

The second category includes services which primarily benefit the poor. This includes services like primary and secondary education, vocational training, preventive and curative health, water supply and sanitation. The third category comprises of services which do benefit the poor somewhat but are of greater value to upper income households like expenditure on law and order, justice and rural development. The last category consists of expenditure on roads and highways which cannot be characterized in any way as being pro-poor. For example, a poor family is unlikely to ever travel on the exotic Lahore-Islamabad motorway. As such, this last category is excluded from pro-poor expenditures.

Based on this categorization, pro-poor expenditure, according to the PRSP Secretariat, aggregated to Rs 2.5 trillion in 2016-17. The growth rate over the previous year was 9 percent. This is significantly lower than the growth in overall public expenditure of 17 percent. However, the growth in pro-poor expenditure in the first quarter of 2017-18 has been, more or less, the same as of total public expenditure, at 13 percent.

Total pro-poor spending in 2016-17 is estimated at 37 percent of overall public expenditure and equivalent to 7.8 percent of the GDP. It is disappointing to note that the level has fallen from 9 percent of the GDP in 2012-13. A comparison can be made with the actual outlays on debt servicing and defense services. These aggregated to 8.6 percent of the GDP in 2016-17, up from 7.3 percent of the GDP in 2012-13. Therefore, it appears that pro-poor expenditures are being 'crowded out' by other major public expenditures like on debt servicing and defense.

The share of pro-poor expenditure on the above three categories also leads to some significant findings. The share of income transfers and subsidies accounted for a share of 27 percent in 2016-17. It was significantly higher at 38 percent in 2012-13. Therefore, the priority attached to expenditure of maximum benefit to the poor has declined during the tenure of the present Government. Instead, the share of the third category, including law and order and justice, has gone up from 29 to 33 percent. The share of the second category of expenditure, primarily on basic social services, has also gone up from 33 to 40 percent. This is, of course, a welcome development.

An important question is the share of the Federal and the Provincial Governments respectively in pro-poor expenditure, especially in the aftermath of the 18th Amendment. The Federal share is approximately 25 percent and consists mostly of outlays on the BISP and subsidies. The combined Provincial share of 75 percent is on education, health, water supply and sanitation, law and order, agriculture and rural development.

The next focus is specifically on expenditure on education and health. The primary motivation here is to see if the level of such expenditure has increased following the generous 7th NFC Award. There does appear to have been a jump. Prior to the Award, the outlay in 2008-09 was 1.8 percent of the GDP on education and 0.6 percent of the GDP on health. This has gone up to 2.2 percent and 1 percent of the GDP respectively by 2016-17.

Unfortunately, this has not been adequately reflected in any significant improvement in social indicators like the literacy rate, which remains low at 60 percent. Perhaps the major reason is the dominant share of current expenditure at over 80 percent on these services. Only 20 percent is being devoted to improvement in quality of service and expansion of coverage. The rise in the share of current expenditure is largely attributable to the generous increase in emoluments of Government employees after the NFC Award.

There is need also to recognize that while outlays on education and health are increasing in relation to the growth in GDP, they are still low by international standards. While Pakistan is now devoting 2.2 percent of the GDP on education, the corresponding magnitude is 3.8 percent in India, 3.3 percent in Indonesia and 4.8 percent of the GDP in Turkey. Similarly, the expenditure on health is less than two-thirds of the level in comparable countries.

Turning to priorities within education, there has been very low growth in expenditure on primary and secondary education in 2016-17 of only 2 percent as compared to the growth of 12 percent in higher education. This is a reflection of the political economy of education allocations, with higher education catering to the more vocal middle class in urban areas. This has created a mismatch between demand and supply. While the output of graduate and higher degree workers is expanding annually by over 8 percent, there is currently an unemployment rate of as much as 17 percent in the case of such workers. Clearly, there is a much stronger case for focusing on secondary, vocational and technical education.

Overall, the conclusion is that pro-poor public spending has shown only modest growth in recent years. Such expenditure is being crowded out by relatively fast growing expenditures on heads like debt servicing and defense. Also, there is a case for changing the priorities within pro-poor expenditure. As described above, the focus must shift more towards income transfer programs like BISP, which covers only one third of the national poverty gap currently, and to basic services like water supply and sanitation, preventive health, technical and vocational education.

Finally, in a country like Pakistan, with a large youth bulge it is truly amazing that the outlay on Youth Affairs is only Rs 418 million. Further, even with a huge backlog of housing units, the expenditure on low cost housing is only Rs 422 million. These remain the two most neglected areas of pro-poor expenditure.

(The writer is Professor Emeritus and former Federal Minister)

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/16/20-page/694343-news.html>

ABBASI BRIEFED ON BISP BENEFICIARIES' GRADUATION PLAN Business Recorder, 17 January 2018

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has directed that international best practices and past experiences should be utilized for formulation of indigenous solutions for the graduation plan of 'Benazir Income Support Programme' (BISP) beneficiaries.

While chairing a meeting on the graduation plan of BISP beneficiaries here on Tuesday, the Prime Minister stated that a comprehensive plan, taking into account all factors, should be put in place for ensuring sustainability and impact.

BISP chairperson Marvi Memon, Secretary BISP Omer Hameed Khan and senior officers briefed the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was told that the graduation strategy is being formulated with an aim to permanently extract BISP beneficiaries from poverty trap through increasing their household income, enhancement of skills and human capital and promoting long term welfare.

The Prime Minister was informed that international best practices and working solutions were being followed for enabling the cash grant recipients to eventually transform into income earning individuals through self-employment and wage employment.

The secretary BISP gave a detailed briefing on various models that would be followed including business incubation and assets transfer for self-employment (BISE), direct cash for start-up business with business coaching (DC) and public work programs for creating income and addressing environmental poverty.

He also briefed the Prime Minister about overall coverage and financial assistance that would be provided to the beneficiaries during various phases of the program.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/17/3-page/694384-news.html>

## OVER 500,000 GRADUATES UNEMPLOYED ACROSS COUNTRY, NA TOLD

Dawn, January 18th, 2018

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Over 500,000 graduates in Pakistan are unemployed, the Statistics Division told the National Assembly on Wednesday.

In response to a question from Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) MNA Dr Fouzia Hameed about details of unemployed graduates, the ministry's written response stated that there were 6,776 graduates in Islamabad are unemployed, of which 3,819 are men and 2,957 are women.

The highest number of unemployed graduates reside in Punjab, where over 310,000 cannot find work. Over 210,000 women and 99,874 men are unemployed graduates, Mr Michael said, adding that Sindh has the second highest number of unemployed graduates at 97,222 – of which 53,673 are men and 43,549 are women.

He said the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) undertakes a Labour Force Survey (LFS) to quantify the size and composition of the labour force in accordance with the education level and standards of classifications of industries and occupations.

The province-wise unemployed population, by the number of graduates, was according to the 2014-15 LFS, the response said.

New, province-wise data of the total number of male and female graduates that are unemployed at present will be available once the data collected in the field during the census held in 2017 is processed and the results finalised.

The detailed final results will be available by April 2018, the ministry said, in response to a question.

Over 83,367 graduates are unemployed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – 36,548 men and 46,819 women. In Balochistan, over 11,000 graduates are unemployed.

MNAs said the lack of opportunity for graduates was one of the reasons why Pakistanis were migrating to other countries.

In a written response to a question from PPP MNA Shagufta Jumani on the number of Pakistanis who have immigrated to Europe alone, the interior ministry told the house that 7,537 Pakistanis had left to settle in European countries between 2012 and 2017.

The highest number of Pakistanis immigrated to Europe in 2017, with 2,458 people leaving to settle abroad compared to 223 in 2012.



Over a thousand Pakistanis left for the United Kingdom in 2013, while 904 left for the UK in 2017. Some 570 people left to settle in Italy in 2017, compared to 36 in 2012, and 386 Pakistanis left for Spain in 2017 compared to just two in 2012.

Germany, France, Norway and Denmark are some of the other European countries Pakistanis have emigrated to in the last five years.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1383666>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 8TH TO JANUARY 14TH 2018  
CONSIDER MALNUTRITION IN SINDH AN EMERGENCY, TASK FORCE TOLD  
Dawn, January 12th, 2018

KARACHI: The provincial task force on nutrition was informed on Thursday that malnutrition in Sindh was severely affecting children and women and should be considered as an emergency situation for the province, needing urgent measures to address it.

Officials in the planning and development ministry said the second meeting of the task force on nutrition was held at the ministry's committee room with minister Hazar Khan Bijarani in the chair.

Coordinator to the chief minister, Mir Hussain Ali, told the meeting that the situation was highly alarming and the provincial government had duly taken it as its top priorities. He further provided details regarding the Accelerated Action Plan (AAP) for reduction of stunting and malnutrition.

He said the project aimed to reduce stunting in Sindh from 48 per cent currently to 30pc in the first five years (by year 2021) and 15pc by 2026.

The meeting was informed that the programme envisaged planning and implementation of nutrition-specific and sensitive interventions by the ministries of health, agriculture, education, local government, livestock and fisheries, social welfare, and population welfare.

“The strategy is to focus on the first 1,000 days of women and children aged two to five years. AAP specifically provides attention to adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women,” the meeting was informed.

Officials said the project would be initiated in 23 districts of Sindh with the highest stunting rates. For the current financial year, they added, two districts had been selected for the programme by the sectors.

Minister Bijarani, a spokesperson of the ministry said, appreciated the efforts of the Sindh government to address the health of future generation of Sindh through that project and valued the energies of the government to overcome the dangerous situation in the province.

He assured the Sindh government's commitment for continuous support in making that endeavour a real success and hoped through proactive and continuous engagement “we together can significantly support the marginalised segments of the society in bringing positive change in the lives of the people of Sindh”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1382324>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 1ST TO JANUARY 7TH 2018  
FIVE MORE INFANTS DIE OF MALNUTRITION IN MITHI  
Dawn, January 4th, 2018

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Malnutrition and outbreak of disease claimed lives of five more children on Wednesday at the Civil Hospital Mithi, raising the total number of deaths to 17 in three days.

Bereaved parents and those of the ailing children said that there were absolutely no facilities in any of the hospitals of the district, including the Civil Hospital.

Wailing parents said that they were being forced to buy medicines as there was an acute shortage of medicines in the hospitals due to the non-release of funds to the hospitals.

Here it is pertinent to mention that the non-release of funds to the Civil Hospital Mithi had mounted the debt to Rs 9.6 million which the government owes to medical stores and petrol pumps.

There was also the dearth of ambulances for shifting the seriously sick patients to Hyderabad, Karachi or other cities. A source in the Health Department said that around 512 infants died during 2017 at six different health facilities of the district.

Dr Shaikh Tanweer Ahmed of Health and Nutrition Society expressed concerns over the unabated deaths of infants and pregnant women in this desert region.

He called upon the Sindh government to immediately release funds so that medicines could be provided to patients. Health experts deplored the prevailing situation in the rural areas which was worse due to the unavailability of the drugs even of minor ailments.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380610/five-more-infants-die-of-malnutrition-in-mithi>

#### PAKISTAN'S BUDGET DEFICIT INCREASES TO RS826B

The Express Tribune, 5 January 2018

In a clear sign of deviating from the path of fiscal discipline in an election year, the budget deficit during the first five months of the fiscal year has shot up to Rs826 billion, which is more than half of the annual target.

One of the key reasons for the increasing budget deficit from July through November was roughly Rs625-billion cost of domestic and foreign debt servicing, said officials in the Ministry of Finance.

The overall budget deficit – gap between expenditures and incomes – has widened to 2.3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Rs826 billion during the July-November period of FY18, said the officials. This was despite the fact that the four federating units showed Rs150 billion as cash surplus during the five months. Excluding provincial savings, the federal budget deficit would jump over Rs970 billion in just five months.

These figures are startling and negate the federal government's claim that it has reversed the trend of the last fiscal year when the budget deficit peaked to a historic high of Rs1.863 trillion.

The trend suggests that the annual budget deficit target of 4.1% of GDP or Rs1.480 trillion that parliament had approved in June last year has already become unrealistic in just five months. The Rs826-billion budget deficit was equal to 56% of the annual target.

The United States' decision to withhold Coalition Support Fund disbursements would also adversely affect Pakistan's fiscal operations.

During the recently concluded talks, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had informed the finance ministry that the budget deficit would swell to 5.4% of GDP or over Rs1.9 trillion. After assuming office, the newly appointed Minister of State for Finance Rana Muhammad Afzal said that the government would try to contain the budget deficit to 5% of GDP.

But results of the first five months suggest that the annual budget deficit may even exceed last year's level of Rs1.863 trillion. During the first half of the last fiscal year, the finance ministry had booked Rs799 billion or 2.4% of GDP budget deficit.

The budget deficit and the current account deficit remain the two biggest challenges for Pakistan's economy that overshadow the government's economic performance in other areas. Because of these twin deficits, there are apprehensions that Pakistan may go back to the IMF for yet another bailout package.

Last month, the IMF stressed that Pakistan needed to undertake strong reforms to maintain external stability, ensure debt sustainability and support higher economic growth in the medium term by containing the budget deficit.

IMF's Mission Chief for Pakistan Harald Finger said that the key challenge for Pakistan's economy was managing through the political situation in the mid-term and during this time focusing on stability issues, declining reserves and containing fiscal deficit.

However, as elections approach, the government has opened the purse for spending on politically motivated development schemes.

One of the main reasons behind the Rs826-billion budget deficit was ballooning debt servicing repayments. From July through November of the current fiscal year, the domestic and foreign debt servicing increased to roughly Rs625 billion, said the officials.

The Rs625 billion debt servicing was almost half of the annual budget earmarked for this purpose. For the current fiscal year 2017-18, the federal government has earmarked Rs1.363 trillion for domestic and foreign debt servicing.

The officials said that the government's growing reliance on short-term domestic and foreign borrowings has significantly increased the debt servicing cost. The 7.2% rupee devaluation since July last year would also increase the government's cost of external debt servicing.

Banks are reluctant to invest in long-term debt instruments of the federal government, which has in return increased the cost of debt servicing on a quarterly basis.

The central government's debt and liabilities increased to Rs21.4 trillion by June last year, which were about 68% of the total national output and is considered a dangerous level.

Federal development spending in the first five months amounted to roughly Rs180 billion or about 18% of the annual budget. This is significantly lower than the limit set by the National Economic Council. The federal development spending should have been close to Rs300 billion.

A significant chunk of the federal development spending has gone to parliamentary schemes.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1601818/2-july-november-pakistans-budget-deficit-increases-rs826b/>

## **February 2018**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 19TH TO FEBRUARY 25TH 2018***

### ***NUTRITION CRISIS***

Dawn, February 19, 2018

EVEN in a generally underdeveloped country, it is easy to identify those in positions of governance that have taken their responsibilities with less seriousness than many of their counterparts. In this regard, the PPP's performance in Sindh has, time and again, stood out as being utterly pathetic when it comes to the uplift and welfare of the millions in whose name it governs.

Not too long ago, regular reports of infants and children dying in Thar — from preventable illnesses — led to much consternation among the public. But the government had nothing to offer except platitudes. What concrete action has been taken to address the lack of basic health facilities, poor health awareness among the residents of Thar, and chronic malnutrition?

In terms of the latter challenge, it was as far back as January 2011 that Unicef warned that the levels of malnutrition in rural Sindh could be compared to those in Chad and Niger. Now, it appears, the situation has deteriorated even further. The latest UN report on gender equality, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda*, highlights how females among the most disadvantaged groups in Sindh fare even worse in terms of malnutrition than their counterparts in Nigeria.

The report makes for shocking reading. To quote just one of the several unpalatable facts it contains, 40.6pc of the poorest rural Sindhi women are underweight, as compared to 18.9pc of Fulani women from the poorest rural households in Nigeria.

True, the problem is not restricted to Sindh alone.

The report also provides details of how overall food insecurity amongst women in the country is 11 percentage points higher than amongst men, as compared to, say, Albania where females were seven percentage points less likely than men to report the same.

Even so, given the repeated alarm bells that have over the years been rung regarding malnutrition in rural Sindh in particular, stringent criticism is warranted.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to discern what it will take to bestir the PPP behemoth.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1390242/nutrition-crisis>

#### UNDP, JAPANESE GOVT LAUNCH \$3.9M PROJECT FOR YOUTHS OF SINDH AND K-P

The Express Tribune, 20 February 2018

The government of Japan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed on Monday an agreement to launch a \$3.9 million initiative to empower more than 20,000 youths in Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P)

The initiative will help improve employment prospects and promote social cohesion through positive interaction amongst youngsters belonging to underprivileged communities.

“The youth represent the future of Pakistan,” said UNDP Pakistan Country Director Ignacio Artaza. He added that the growing population of youth in Pakistan posed great challenges as almost 1.8 million jobs need to be created every year in order to employ these youths. Artaza also thanked the Japanese government for teaming up with the UNDP for the cause of creating employment opportunities for Pakistani youngsters.

Japanese Ambassador Takashi Kurai said a large population of Pakistan was comprised of youth and it was critical for the development of Pakistan to create sources of income for them. “Japan will continue to support the youth so that they can take the lead in development of this country [Pakistan],” the ambassador said.

Through the youth empowerment project, residents of underprivileged areas in Sindh and K-P would receive training in demand-driven skills so that they are able to get jobs in local industries. The project also aims to enhance social interaction of youths in areas that currently have a limited scope for social and economic engagement by developing youth-friendly community spaces.

Around 31% of Pakistan's 207.7 million population comprises people aged between 15 and 29 years. With a youth unemployment rate of 10.8%, it is crucial to provide youngsters with skills and knowledge they need to operate in an increasingly competitive employment market so that they can contribute to the sustainable development of the country.

The project announced by the UNDP and Japanese government also aligns with the Vision 2025 announced by the federal government and would help Pakistan achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by engaging young people and providing them employment opportunities.

The UNDP and Japanese government have also collaborated on earlier in projects in Pakistan including relief and rehabilitation work in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and electoral reforms at the national level.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1639128/1-undp-japanese-govt-launch-3-9m-project-youths-sindh-k-p/>

## UNICEF SAYS PAKISTAN IS RISKIEST COUNTRY FOR NEWBORNS

Dawn, February 21st, 2018

KARACHI: Pakistan is the riskiest place to be born in in the world as measured by its newborn mortality rate. For every 1,000 babies born in Pakistan in 2016, 46 died before the end of their first month, a staggering 1 in 22, says a Unicef report released on Tuesday.

Titled Every child alive, the urgent need to end newborn deaths, the report once again highlights the lack of countries' progress in saving the lives of newborn babies — those aged less than one month.

According to the report, while newborn mortality rates have fallen in recent decades, they still lag behind the impressive gains made for children one month to five years old. Between 1990 and 2016, the mortality rate in this age group dropped by 62 per cent — almost two thirds.

In contrast, the newborn mortality rate declined by only 49pc. As a result, newborn deaths now account for a greater, and growing, share of all deaths among children below the age of five years.

Report highlights lack of progress by countries in saving the life of those aged less than one month

“Every year, 2.6 million babies die before turning one month old. One million of them take their first and last breaths on the day they are born. Another 2.6 million are stillborn. Each of these deaths is a tragedy, especially because the vast majority are preventable.

“More than 80 per cent of newborn deaths are the result of premature birth, complications during labour and delivery and infections such as sepsis, meningitis and pneumonia. Similar causes, particularly complications during labour, account for a large share of stillbirths,” the report says.

On the reasons behind high newborn mortality rate, the report says that this is partly because newborn deaths are difficult to address with a single drug or intervention and they require a system-wide approach. It is also due to a lack of momentum and global commitment to newborn survival.

It also highlights that the risk of dying as a newborn varies enormously depending on where a baby is born and newborn survival is closely linked to a country's income level.

“High-income countries have an average newborn mortality rate (the number of deaths per thousand live births) of just three. In comparison, low-income countries have a newborn mortality rate of 27. This gap is significant: If every

country brought its newborn mortality rate down to the high-income average, or below, by 2030, 16 million newborn lives could be saved,” it says.

Of the 10 countries with the highest newborn mortality rates, eight are in sub-Saharan Africa and two in South Asia.

The 10 countries which reported the highest number of newborn deaths in 2016 are: India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Afghanistan.

At the other end of the spectrum, Japan, Iceland and Singapore are the three safest countries in which to be born, as measured by their newborn mortality rates. In these countries, only one in 1,000 babies dies during the first 28 days. A baby born in Pakistan is almost 50 times more likely to die during his or her first month than a baby born in one of these three countries.

But a country’s income level explains only part of the story, the report says. In Kuwait and the United States of America, both high-income countries, the newborn mortality rate is four.

“This is only slightly better than lower-middle-income countries such as Sri Lanka and Ukraine, where the newborn mortality rate is five. Rwanda, a low-income country, has more than halved its newborn mortality rate in recent decades, reducing it from 41 in 1990 to 17 in 2016, which puts the country well ahead of upper-middle-income countries like the Dominican Republic, where the newborn mortality rate is 21,” the report says.

Millions of young lives, the report says, could be saved every year if mothers and babies had access to affordable, quality health care, good nutrition and clean water.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1390709/unicef-says-pakistan-is-riskiest-country-for-newborns>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 12TH TO FEBRUARY 18TH 2018

DATA CONTROVERSY: NUMBERS SHOW A DECLINE IN POVERTY

The Express Tribune, February 12th, 2018.

Poverty is the most misconceived subject in the region. It is customary to declare your lavish house as “gareeb khana” and everybody declares himself a poor.

Pakistan has a strong tradition of measuring incidence of poverty in the country since 1960s.

The credibility of Pakistan’s poverty number is well established as the government is not the only entity which is measuring poverty. There are many researchers who estimate poverty in their private or institutional capacities.

Estimates became controversial in 2008 after which there was a long impasse of official poverty estimates which lasted till 2016. An independent committee of experts was constituted by the government in 2012 to review the official methodology used in surveys of poverty. The government also sought help from the World Bank to learn about best international practices. Finally, it came up with a poverty number in April 2016 which was made public.

The government went one step ahead and engaged with provincial governments and academia for publishing multidimensional poverty index (MPI). In June 2016, the Planning Commission published a district-wise profile of poverty and its dynamics which would help in assessing the effectiveness of public money. This information was presented in all divisional headquarters of the four provinces and consultations were held to further improve the outcome of the MPI.

To improve transparency in the entire process, the government, for the first time, has made the household level micro-data public. Now any researcher can download the entire data from the website of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

The government has also decided to build capacity in and outside the government and to this end a quality training exercise according to international standards was organised by the Planning Commission. This was not only attended by officials from the federal and provincial governments but also by researchers from universities of all 4 provinces. This training was held in September 2017.

Now, the spread of poverty in the country will not only be estimated by the government but also by more than 30 well-trained academicians. Analytical capacity was also developed through the exercise to promote knowledge about poverty dynamics.

There are some global definitions of poverty which are used for international comparison. Definitions used by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Fund are the most popular.

The World Bank defines people earning less than \$1.9 a day to be below the poverty line while the multidimensional poverty index considers factors other than income as well. According to both measures, poverty has declined in Pakistan during the last one decade. It has decreased even when economic growth was not very high. Inequality was a concern for Pakistan in the past but to our surprise Pakistan is one of only a few countries where inequality measured by GINI coefficient has improved.

There are several reasons for this anomalous development and one reason is that during the last decade remittances from Middle East have witnessed exponential growth while those from North America and Europe have grown at a slower pace. Remittances from the Middle East are normally destined for relatively poor families as compared to remittances from the West which find their way to affluent families. The growth of income in lowest quintiles is much higher than highest quintiles.

The national definitions like cost of basic needs (CBN) and MPI also support the claim of a fall in poverty in recent years. Both these methods evolved in the global arena and subsequently adopted by Ministry of Planning. The narrative developed by some sections of media is that the government is shying away from releasing latest power numbers is simply ridiculous as there is nothing to hide.

The PBS has released the micro-data on its website and think tank Social Policy and Development Center has already calculated its poverty number from it and made it public.

The poverty number released by the government is widely quoted and its thorough accountability is done by researchers. The government could not afford to release numbers without proper scrutiny. There are anecdotal evidences available from the data released by the PBS, economic data, social development etc. One thing is very clear that poverty has not increased in recent years primarily because of socio-economic development in the country. World Economic Forum's data of last year suggests that Pakistan has done a lot to enhance inclusiveness of economic growth which is likely to decrease poverty. Pakistan climbed by 9 notches on inclusivity of economic growth during the last 2 years.

Regarding the government's introduction of social safety nets, the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) is regarded as the best program of cash disbursement in the region. A new National Database registry is being developed at the Tehsil level to incorporate information of all deserving persons in the database.

Things are happening at provincial and federal levels in a discrete manner but social transformation is also slow to emerge at the surface. Poverty is not a challenge just for the government but also for the rest of the society and the government's response is marginal compared to the society's efforts. It must be looked at in this perspective. Private philanthropy represents the biggest chunk of poverty alleviation efforts.

The writer is Chief of Poverty Alleviation and SDGs Section of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform

## NATIONAL NUTRITION SURVEY LAUNCHED

Dawn, February 13th, 2018

Faiza Ilyas

**KARACHI:** Has the country made any progress on its dismal indicators relating to the nutritional status of women and children, food security and household water quality over the past six years?

This important question will be answered through a countrywide survey planned by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in collaboration with the Aga Khan University (AKU) and Unicef.

This is the second such survey since the 2011 National Nutrition Survey, which presented a bleak picture of Pakistan's status on woman and child health and related areas. One of the key survey findings were: 44 per cent of children were found stunted, too short for their age and more than half of all households were found either hungry or faced threat of hunger.

“Poor nutrition in the crucial early years triggers irreversible mental and physical defects that have a lifelong impact on a child's productivity and immunity against disease and earning capacity as an adult,” Dr Atif Habib, assistant professor at AKU's department of paediatrics and child health said at a ceremony held on Monday at the university for the formal launch of the National Nutrition Survey 2018.

According to him, malnutrition also has a vicious, multi-generational impact since malnourished mothers are more likely to have underweight children.

“This survey will analyse Pakistan's progress on a variety of fronts that influence nutrition and will enable us to design targeted interventions to boost the health of our young women and children. It will also highlight barriers to adequate food intake and nutrition-related health status,” he said.

The survey would be conducted district-wise to have better insight into the health challenge, he added.

Cristina Brugiolo representing Unicef, Sindh, noted that the survey data would help Pakistan develop evidence-based initiatives to achieve targets under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which call on countries to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030 and to address the causes of preventable deaths in newborns and children.

“The scale of the problem (in Pakistan) necessitates the need for regular monitoring as good nutrition lays the foundation for healthy and thriving communities and nations,” she observed.

Citing data on Pakistan's nutritional status, Professor Iqtidar Ahmad Khan of AKU's division for women and child health said the country had some of the worst malnutrition rates in South Asia and progress to address social determinants over the last several decades had been very slow.

“The results of 2011 survey were alarming and showed that Pakistan is one of the 10 countries where more than half of the population is affected by malnutrition in the form of both under and overweight.

“One-third of all children are underweight, 44pc are stunted and more than 15pc are wasted, half of them are anaemic and almost one-third of these children have iron-deficiency anaemia.”

On malnutrition among women, he said that the phenomenon was widely prevalent in women of productive age and the 2011 survey also pointed to immense deficiencies of micro-nutrients among women.



Dr Baseer Achakzai, director nutrition wing at the health ministry, said that the 2018 survey would be the largest [such] survey in the country. It would help the government assess how the country's nutritional indicators had changed following the introduction of provincial nutrition support programmes and some province-led initiatives such as the Benazir Income Support Programme.

Findings from the survey are also expected to shed light on the impact of the 2011 decision to devolve the subject of health from federal to respective provincial governments.

The survey will be conducted in all provinces and regions in all districts of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

It will gather information from 115,500 households, with field teams going door-to-door in villages, towns and cities across the country. The data to be collected includes blood and urine samples which will highlight the presence of key minerals for growth and good health; height and weight measurements to detect development delays; and an assessment of the state of household drinking water quality and sanitation facilities which can cause illness and malnutrition.

Field teams will also collect information on household income, gender empowerment, education levels, and breastfeeding practices which are known to have an impact on nutrition indicators.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources are also acting as technical partners in the survey, which will complete in 13 months.

Other speakers at the event included Dr Salman Kirmani, chair of the department of paediatrics at AKU, Dr Sher Baz from the health ministry, Dr Iftikhar Mallah from Sindh health department and Dr Naveed Bhutto from Sindh Nutrition Support Programme.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389020/national-nutrition-survey-launched>

NUTRITION SURVEY

Dawn, February 14th, 2018

THE quality of nutrition is of critical importance to the quality of an individual's life and, by extension, what he or she can contribute to society as a whole. A government report in 2017 estimated that Pakistan lost \$7.6bn, or 3pc of its GDP, each year due to malnutrition. It is not a moment too soon, therefore, that a countrywide nutrition survey has been launched by the health ministry. The study will seek to deduce how much progress Pakistan has made on improving the nutritional status of women and children, food security and household water quality over the past six years since the first such survey was carried out.

That study had produced some dire results, among them that 44pc of children in Pakistan are stunted and that more than half the households face hunger or the threat of hunger. It had also revealed massive deficiencies of micro-nutrients among women. Organised on a district-wise pattern, the latest survey will take 13 months to complete, with teams gathering information from 115,500 households, going from door to door in villages, towns and cities across the country.

The result of such an exhaustive exercise will be invaluable in planning policy and designing targeted health interventions. But the next logical step is to enhance the outlay on nutrition. For a country that is, according to its power elite, poised on the cusp of a 'game changer', it is abominable that the government spends only 3.7pc of its GDP on nutrition, the lowest in Asia.

Human rights and the duty of the state aside, such an inequitable distribution of resources has consequences that span generations and hobble a country's progress. Women with anaemia and other nutrition-related health complications

are not only at greater risk of dying in childbirth; they also bear underweight children, who are at a disadvantage in physical and cognitive development throughout their lives. Once the fact-finding is done, attention must turn to a more rational allocation of funds for nutrition.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1389225/nutrition-survey>

## March 2018

### **NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 26TH TO MARCH 31ST 2018**

#### **AROUND 350,000 YOUTHS REGISTERED WITH PORTAL SLMIS: TEVTA CHIEF**

Business Recorder, 28 March 2018

LAHORE: Chairman Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (Tevta) Irfan Qaiser Sheikh said that around 350,000 students registered with world's sixth and Pakistan's first online Skilled Labour Market Information System (SLMIS) in just three years.

"SLMIS is playing its role in eliminating unemployment from largest province of Pakistan as well providing job opportunities to youngsters."

Talking to a meeting of officials regarding performance of SLMIS here on Tuesday, Irfan Qaiser sheikh said that since its launched in 2015 SLMIS had facilitated thousands of TEVTA pass outs who not only got jobs in Pakistani market but SLMIS helped them in getting jobs in foreign countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE and other Gulf countries.

He said that three years ago, there were several online job portals which were working but none of them were focusing the youth having technical and vocational education. After studying these portals, it was decided that a portal should be established which do fulfil the needs of the youngster who have technical and vocational education, he added.

Irfan further said since its inception; SLMIS had not only provided jobs information but also guided the students about the employers and other job related information. He said through that portal they could know the jobs available in technical and vocational sector while sitting anywhere in the world. "This is especially for the youngsters belonging to rural areas," he added.

He said that in just three years 369,684 students were registered with the SLMIS whereas around 35,000 employers had been registered who were providing and updating their jobs at the portal. "These employers not only local but several international employers are also updating their jobs in this portal."

Talking about SLMIS, he said TEVTA pass outs could submit their particulars for SLMIS developed by TEVTA Punjab, this information system is providing key information on Punjab's labour market including market trends, skill training opportunities in different trades and technologies, data of passing out students and job seekers as well as vacancies for technical persons in the industry.

Irfan said the facility of free registration was available for all the students of technical and vocational institutes, job seekers and employers on that web portal so that unemployed skilled youth may find suitable job opportunities.

"This web portal is also providing information on employment and unemployment rates in different sectors of industry besides other useful economic data. At present, UK, Korea, Malaysia, Philippine and Sri Lanka are using labour market information systems and all these systems have been studied in development of SLMIS by Punjab TEVTA.

Chairperson TEVTA said SLMIS is being operated and maintained at TEVTA Secretariat. The labour market information of whole Punjab is consolidated at TEVTA secretariat in coordination with its district level offices.

## KHAQAN LAUNCHES BISP ENDOWMENT FUND

Dawn, March 30th, 2018

Bakhtawar Mian

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi launched on Thursday the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Endowment Fund and Graduation Programme, announcing a grant of Rs1 billion for the fund.

The Graduation Programme of BISP is supported by \$35 million grant of the Asian Development Bank. Speaking at the launching ceremony of the fund, the prime minister said that the government took pride in the programme that had seen an increase in allocation and cash transfers of over 50 per cent. He said the government was also committed to ridding the country of poverty and for this purpose a big budget had been allocated.

The prime minister said that under the graduation programme most deserving of the beneficiaries were being paid 'direct cash' to help them to stand on their own feet by launching their business and the initiative would play a key role in alleviating poverty to a great extent from society. He said he had high hopes from beneficiaries of the programme, adding they would contribute to the progress and prosperity of the country.

The prime minister said that he believed that allocations for the programme should be further increased and the initiative should focus on eliminating poverty in the next five years. Mr Abbasi appreciated the working of the BISP programme with an outreach of 5.7 million women. He also wished that the graduation programme, which is now targeting five districts, should be expanded to more districts.

Speaking on the occasion, BISP Chairperson Marvi Memon said that the BISP had Rs121 billion fund which was being used for unconditional cash transfers, conditional cash transfers such as Waseela-i-Taleem as well as some other complimentary initiatives to rid society of poverty and illiteracy. She said the main focus of the programme was on women's empowerment.

Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan Jean-François Cautain said that the EU was a partner in development of Pakistan and it supported the changing field of the BISP from the cash transfer mechanism to the graduation model.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1398403>

## BISP, UBER SIGN AGREEMENT

Dawn, March 31st, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Uber Pakistan for creating economic opportunity programme for BISP beneficiaries.

Under the programme, a pilot project will be conducted to test-run the potential of Uber for the BISP beneficiaries.

Under this MoU, four-wheeled vehicles will be provided without any down payment and will include a target instalment of Rs8,000, monthly, for five years repayment.

For rickshaws, a target instalment of Rs5,000-8,000 monthly, for five years repayment.

Secretary BISP Omar Hamid Khan stated that he was particularly excited about this MoU as this will take forward the BISP benefits in terms of technology as well as women empowerment, as the main focus of this partnership will be kept on inclusion of women beneficiaries as drivers.

A pilot project comprising 100 beneficiaries will be launched in Karachi, Lahore Rawalpindi and Islamabad with 25 beneficiaries from each city.

It will consist of asset transfer of vehicles on zero collateral and easy instalments to the selected beneficiaries.

This partnership will help women entrepreneurs acquire requisite skills for driving and complete associated licensing requirements for rickshaws and other modes of transport, as well as other trainings that enhance candidates' digital literacy, operational excellence, entrepreneurship skills, communication and customer care abilities.

The MoU was signed between BISP and Uber on Friday in the presence of BISP Chairperson Marvi Memon, Minister of State for Communications Junaid Anwar Chaudhary and Minister of State for Industries and Production Sardar Arshad Khan Leghari.

Marvi Memon termed it as a follow-up of meeting between Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Mr Dara Khowsroshahi, CEO of Uber Technologies Inc at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos earlier this year. Memon said, "The safety, security and dignity of BISP beneficiaries are most important to us." She hoped that the partnership will help BISP beneficiaries exit the poverty trap.

Speaking on the occasion, Junaid Anwar Chaudhary said, "It will be a game changer for rickshaw and taxi services in Pakistan," adding, that the partnership should be replicated in other smaller cities, if it is successful in the major cities.  
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1398621/bisp-uber-sign-agreement>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 19TH TO MARCH 25TH 2018

ALLEVIATING HUNGER THROUGH BIOFORTIFICATION

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, March 19th, 2018

Amjad Mahmood

ALMOST two billion people in the world face hidden hunger or micronutrient deficiencies because essential vitamins and minerals are missing from their diet.

Deficiencies of micronutrients like iron, zinc and vitamin A may lead to stunted growth, poor cognitive development, increased risk of infections, and among women it may cause complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

In Pakistan, where an overwhelming majority of people live in rural areas, around 80 per cent of the population suffer from hidden hunger.

Short-term strategies being used the world over to overcome micronutrient deficiencies include food supplements and food fortification. But both these approaches are expensive as they require repeated investment.

Punjab plans to introduce Rs3.5bn, five-year project aimed at enhancing nutrition of staple crops, fruits, vegetables and their products

Supplements do treat multiple micronutrient deficiencies, but the strategy is resource-intensive and does not tackle the real cause of the problem: dietary inadequacy.

Some private-sector companies have been offering fortified wheat flour and food products like bread. But they meet the requirements of a limited, especially well-off, people as the poorest families do not have access to commercially processed foods.

Agriculture authorities in Punjab have recently planned an intervention for downtrodden people, often those affected the most by hidden hunger. The Rs3.5 billion biofortification project aims at enhancing nutrition of staple crops, fruits, vegetables and their products in the climate change scenario.

Under the five-year plan, iron and zinc-enriched, disease-resistant and high-yielding wheat, rice, maize, canola and citrus varieties will be developed at various research institutes of the Punjab agriculture department.

Dr Javaid Ahmad, director for wheat at the Ayub Agriculture Research Institute (AARI), Faisalabad, says most Pakistanis cannot afford costly food supplements and mostly use wheat flour as their daily diet. Therefore, the institute plans to develop wheat varieties that are rich in iron and zinc.

Being a lengthy process is the only disadvantage of this strategy, as developing an iron- and zinc-rich variety may take eight to 10 years, he says. As a medium-term measure, studies are being conducted to find out fertilisers that may increase iron and zinc contents in the crop through soil application. This approach may take around three years.

In the short run, efforts are afoot to develop products which can be mixed with flour to increase the volume of micronutrients, he says, and stresses that the enhanced level of iron, zinc and vitamins will not affect the flavour and colour of food products.

He rules out fears expressed by some health professionals that an overdose of minerals and vitamins may lead to health complications, arguing that bio-fortified crops have already been introduced in 30 countries and from nowhere any health hazard has been reported because of the consumption of the iron- and zinc-rich food.

“The products will be locally tested from all aspects before being marketed for the consumption of the general public,” he says.

Some agro traders fear that bio-fortified crops and food products may be unacceptable in international markets like the European Union and North America where people are either not faced with micronutrient deficiency or prefer supplementation to bio-fortified diet.

Samiullah Chaudhry, chairman of the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan, says the association approached Punjab’s agriculture authorities with similar fears because rice is also among the crops included in the biofortification project.

However, they were assured that the bio-fortified rice lines will be introduced only in a limited area. Moreover, the packaging of the bio-fortified crop and products will clearly show that the packed content is high in iron and zinc so that it lands only in the hands of interested buyers.

Dr Ahmad of the AARI says that there is no question of damage to the export business, as the institute will not cross the internationally admissible limits or standards of biofortification in any case, no matter the products are launched locally or internationally.

However, a senior faculty member of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, throws a word of caution. “Much will depend on the model being used for biofortification,” he says, requesting not to be named because his department is a rival to the AARI. “It will be better to use a model without GMO (genetically modified organism) lines for the sake of health. Otherwise, you will have to go for rigorous health tests before introducing bio-fortified food products.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1396085>

## BUSINESS INCUBATION PROGRAMME

Business Recorder, 20 March 2018

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to lay out and agree on the broad framework of “Business Incubation for Self-employment” (BISE) Programme for graduation of BISP beneficiaries across Pakistan. The programme is financed by

(Asian Development Bank) ADB under Social Protection Development Project, which is to be followed by signing of Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the BISE programme.

The first phase of \$35 Million BISE programme shall be implemented over two years from April 2018 as further specified in the SLA by NRSP as implementing agency.

BISP chairperson MNA Marvi Memon stated that programme was envisaged in 2015 and it took three years to launch this initiative. She thanked the BISP secretary and his team for their unequivocal efforts and further added that, “BISP must continue this programme.”

The ADB and the Government of Pakistan mutually agreed to include NRSP as an “implementing agency” responsible for carrying out the “Business Incubation and Inclusive Business Components” of the BISP Graduation Program (BGP) on terms and conditions to be agreed between BISP and NRSP and duly endorsed by ADB. The said project has also been endorsed by the prime minister of Pakistan.

BISP secretary Omar Hamid Khan welcomed the guests and termed partnership as “significant and momentous” for the vulnerable segments of society across Pakistan. He hoped that the partnership will benefit the BISP beneficiaries in unique ways in the years to come.

BISE aims at making poor people ready for taking up viable self-employment. The programme will target a total of 100,000 households in total 5 districts including Bahawalpur, Charsadda, Jacobabad, Kech and Nasirabad. The selected beneficiaries shall be competent to be self-employed and show their willingness to be part of the graduation programme.

ADB director general Werner Liepach said, “We consider ourselves as partners, not donors.” He said that the partnership between BISP and ADB started with support for the Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT) segment only. He added that US\$400 million were initially given to BISP to increase the number of BISP beneficiaries.

Werner appreciated the efforts of BISP and said he was happy to see programme moving towards its second phase of graduating beneficiaries. He further added that the flow of funds will not be a problem as the program progresses.

It also includes insurance of beneficiaries against accidental death, hospitalisation and disability risks, linking up the poor to the value chains of small and large companies in the private sector.

Xiaohong Yong, ADB Country Director added that BISP is rapidly implementing the graduation model and termed it as “light at the end of tunnel.”

One of the major aspects include an agreement with the selected BISP beneficiary that UCT shall continue for only 1-2 years to provide protection against risks, thus, successfully graduating the BISP beneficiary out of poverty.

Rashid Bajwa, CEO NRSP hoped that this partnership will have a long-term impact on the lives of poor across the country.

At the ceremony, Prof Reema Hanna, who is part of MIT-Harvard-LSE research team, stated that graduation model is being tested around the world to eradicate poverty. She hoped that the BISP’s graduation model could offer field learning. She further added, “We’ve a real opportunity here as we can utilize this learning at global scale.”—PR

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/20/12-page/705917-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 4TH TO MARCH 11TH 2018

VICIOUS CIRCLE: POVERTY FORCING PEOPLE TO SELL ORGANS

The Express Tribune, March 9th, 2018.

Under the thick smoke billowing from the chimney of a brick kiln near Pakistan-India Wagah border, a labourer, along with his wife and four children, is busy working in the scorching heat. Each one of his peers has the visible signs of severe sunburn on their faces and other parts of the body. Their malnourished and slender bodies clearly show their financial condition.

For 12 hours' work, they earn a mere Rs900. Besides working tooth and nail, they have to pay a loan to the brick kiln's owner, which is definitely not an easy. Three years ago, they had to get a loan of Rs1.9 million. For that reason, Halima Bibi, the mother of four, had to sell her kidney for just Rs200,000.

Halima's husband, Ghulam Hussain, was underweight and not fit for kidney's transplantation. While showing her scar emerged in her lower torso, she does not feel awkward. "The poor have no respect in society," she bemoans.

She recalls the night the brick kiln owner ransacked their one-room house and started torturing them, demanding the borrowed money.

"I had to pay his loan installment immediately, otherwise we would be forced to work as bonded labour for a few years," she continues.

"Though I have sold my kidney, my family is still bearing the burden of the loan. No one is here to see our plight." Pakistan Bhatta Mazdoor Association President Mehmood Butt, who is striving hard to bring improvement in the lives of these workers, says the selling of body parts will end until rigorous social reforms are in place.

"They all are bonded labourers. Even the government has promulgated the law to eliminate the bonded labour but it is thriving and the kidney transplant is just a small symptom of this vicious circle," he narrates.

He adds this was a just glimpse into the lives of these people. "Their children do not go to schools. They eat unhealthy food and live in extremely poor conditions."

"Actually, they are the most vulnerable segment of the society. Illegal kidney transplants are a huge business and the media is showing just the tip of the iceberg," he remarks.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1654862/1-vicious-circle-poverty-forcing-people-sell-organs>

## April 2018

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 23 RD TO APRIL 29TH 2018***

***RS 563.57 BN DISBURSED AMONG BISP BENEFICIARIES IN LAST DECADE***

Business Recorder, 27 April 2018

AAMIR SAEED

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) disbursed Rs563.57 billion to its beneficiaries till January 15, 2018 since its inception in 2008.

This was revealed in the Pakistan Economic Survey 2017-18 launched by the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Finance, Revenue and Economic Reforms on Thursday.

The number of BISP beneficiaries increased from 1.7 million in 2008-09 to approximately 5.63 million by December 2017 while the quarterly cash grant has been increased from Rs3,000 per family to Rs4,834 per family.

The PML-N government increased the BISP budgetary allocations from Rs70 billion in 2012-13 to Rs75 billion in 2013-14, that was subsequently enhanced to Rs97 billion in 2014-15, Rs102 billion in 2015-16, Rs115 billion in 2016-17 and for the current fiscal year allocation is Rs121 billion.

Under Waseela-e-Taleem programme, the BISP aims to enrol approximately 2.0 million children in primary school by December 2018. This involves a cash transfer of Rs250 per month per child paid quarterly (Rs 750 per child) for all children of each beneficiary family in the age bracket of 4-12 years in return for their compliance with the co-responsibilities of school admissions and a minimum of 70 percent quarterly attendance.

Field operations of the programme began in October 2012 and as of December 2017, 1.895 million children have been enrolled and a total of about Rs5.81 billion has been disbursed as stipend under the Conditional Cash Transfer.

World Bank has extended a credit of \$150 million for 'Pakistan Social Safety Net Project' for primary education of children of BISP beneficiaries. The BISP and World Bank signed a new programme on March 30, 2017 amounting to \$100 million.

The Department for International Development (DFID) has also extended support to BISP through a grant allocation of GBP £300.3 million for primary education of children of BISP beneficiaries.

Asian Development Bank under Social Protection Development Project extended a soft loan of \$395 million through Special Drawing Rights (SDR) arrangement. An amount of approximately \$35-40 million has been earmarked by the ADB in the project to pilot the graduation models which have been approved by the BISP Board in its 29th meeting held on January 29, 2018.

An amount of \$359 million (approx) has been disbursed from the total project allocations and this project is expected to end by June 30, 2018.

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has disbursed an amount of approximately Rs187.94 billion to its Partner Organizations in 130 districts across the country since its inception in April 2000 to December 2017.

During the same period, 8.4 million microcredit loans were disbursed with 60 percent loans to women and 80 percent financing extended to rural areas.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/27/15-page/712960-news.html>

#### POVERTY LEVEL DROPPED 24.3%, CLAIMS GOVT

The Express Tribune, 27 April 2018

The government on Thursday claimed that the poverty level in Pakistan declined to 24.3% during the third year of the ruling party, according to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2017-18.

However, it blocked the release of province based data of poverty reduction due to steep decline in poverty in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) led federal government published the poverty statistics for the fiscal year 2015-16 in the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2017-18, which was launched by Advisor to Prime Minister on Finance Dr Miftah Ismail.

The survey showed that 10.8 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty in 2015-16. Moreover, four out of every ten Pakistanis are officially considered poor as against three out of every ten Pakistanis who were considered poor four years ago.

In absolute terms, 50.4 million are now being recognised as poor against the previous figure of 60.2 million.



The percentage of people living below poverty line has declined from 29.5% in 2013-14 to 24.3% in 2015-16, according to the survey. There was a decline of 5.2% in the poverty within two years. Over the last decade, Pakistan's poverty headcount has witnessed a persistent decline both at national and regional levels, it added.

Poverty in both rural and urban areas has also been on the declining trend with the poverty headcount of 12.5% in urban areas and 30.7% in rural areas in 2015-16. The decline in poverty is more pronounced in urban areas than rural areas.

The declining trends are shared at national as well as urban and rural areas. While comparing with 2011-12, the largest percentage decline in poverty headcount was observed in year 2013-14 when national poverty headcount declined by 6.8 percentage points with 6.2 percentage points decline in Urban and 7.5 percentage points in rural areas.

Moreover, the poverty headcount declined by 5.7 percentage points in urban areas and 4.9 percentage points in rural areas between 2014 and 2016, thereby leading to an overall decline of 5.2 percentage points decline in incidence of national poverty headcount.

However, the government did not release the provincial breakup of the poverty headcount due to steep reduction in poverty in K-P, which is governed by Imran Khan's Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI), said sources in the Planning Ministry.

The reduction in K-P almost doubled to over 10% as compared to 5.2% reduction in poverty at national level. The poverty decreased less than 4% in Punjab, which is ruled by PML-N as compared to the reduction in K-P.

The main reason behind steep reduction in poverty in K-P was restoration of peace, which restored livelihood opportunities for the people. The federal government and the international donor community also pumped in billions of rupees in the province after the launch of Operation Zarb-e-Azb to rebuild the destroyed infrastructure.

The poverty also modestly decreased in Sindh and Balochistan.

The targeted poverty reduction programmes like Benazir Income Support Programme, relative political stability and peace and tranquility led to reduction in poverty at national level, according to the Economic Survey of Pakistan.

The strong recovery of economic growth rate, continued higher inflows of remittances especially from Middle East, which are destined to relatively poor families, said the report. Moreover, inclusive characteristics of economic growth are some of the important causes that can be attributed to a significant decline in the poverty headcount since 2005-06, according to the survey report.

The decline in poverty incidence is phenomenal in Pakistan since 2007-08 and normal inter survey decline is around seven percentage point with only exception in 2010-11. The inter survey decline in poverty headcount was insignificant in 2011-12 as compared to 2010-11 survey, according to the report.

There can be two possible undertones for this low performance. Firstly, the inter-survey period may not sufficient to observe meaningful decline in poverty both at national and regional levels. Secondly, two catastrophic floods of 2010-11 hit a significant blow to rural populace whose income and livelihoods were severely affected by these floods, according to the Survey.

Overall, despite the floods of 2010 and chronic energy shortages, aggravated security situation and government's limited capacity to mobilize and channelize its own resources exclusively for social welfare and poverty eradication programmes, the declining trend in poverty headcount in Pakistan is both promising and encouraging.

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 16TH TO APRIL 22ND 2018

## OUR FEEBLE WAR ON MALNUTRITION

Zahra Anum

PAKISTAN has been fighting a battle against the threat of malnutrition, at least for the past 10 years.

Despite a multitude of programmes in place, the country's nutrition indicators seem to be on a downward spiral. Some even believe that the country is fast approaching a point where declaring a national nutrition emergency no longer seems a far-fetched idea. Provincially speaking, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has already done so.

In Sindh alone, the last known survey to give an overview of the nutrition situation, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 2014, revealed alarming rates of stunting, wasting and child mortality.

The infant mortality rate is 82 deaths per 1,000 live births while under-five mortality is at 104 deaths per 1,000 live births. More than 42pc children under the age of five are underweight, 48pc children under five years are stunted or short for their age and 15pc children are wasted or thin for their height.

More often than not, investment in nutrition is considered to be a moral obligation: an ancillary factor when talking about the protection of human rights and recognising good governance.

And yet, the loss to the future workforce as a result of malnutrition is valued at \$2.24 billion per year, according to a collaborative paper between the nutrition section of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform and the World Food Programme's country office in Pakistan.

The "cost of doing nothing", as stated in the report, "totals \$7.6bn annually for Pakistan, which corresponds to nearly three per cent of GDP". It highlights the importance of investing in sustained human development which offers "a \$16 return for every \$1 invested".

It is high time the government looked outside the traditional models and leveraged new and innovative projects already in place for greater impact

As the situation gains further urgency, there is a need for all those involved to take a step back and analyse the interventions put in place.

Although multi-sector programmes have been introduced after the realisation that nutrition cannot be dealt with by the health department alone, it is now time to look outside the traditional models and to leverage new and innovative projects already in place for greater impact.

The last Global Nutrition Report emphasised that "opportunities through innovative financing mechanisms and existing investment flows for multiple wins in multiple sectors need to be explored".

One such connection seems to be in the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). It is trying to link nutrition awareness with poverty alleviation through conditional cash transfers (CCT), using private sector's mobile cash transfer networks like Easypaisa and UBL Omni.

BISP, despite being heavily criticised by some quarters, can be a step in the right direction. Dr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutta, one of the world's leading experts in nutrition, states that while he is all for meaningful targeting through BISP, he has his reservations.

Dr Bhutta says that he cannot support “a model where the middleman takes up to a third of the monthly allowance for just encashing BISP cards, as seems to be happening in some places. An effective CCT programme like the models of South America (eg Oportunidades, now rebranded as Prospera) can be emulated.”

Prospera is a poverty alleviation programme implemented in Mexico. With a structure similar to BISP, its three chief components are education, health, and nutrition. What set the programme apart was its rigorous independent evaluation of programme impact and emphasis on accurate, credible data to measure effectiveness.

More often than not, investment in nutrition is considered to be a moral obligation: an ancillary factor when talking about the protection of human rights and recognising good governance.

A Cornell University study, however, stated that conditional cash transfers in Mexico, for political and logistical reasons, often did not reach the rural poor and were largely regarded as inefficient.

For Prospera to be successful, an external firm, the International Food Policy Research Institute, was hired to conduct the evaluation, along with some academic economists.

Building on this, Dr Bhutta points out that the main component of Prospera’s success is lacking in local projects such as BISP. He cites abuse by banks and financial institutions as the reason behind discrediting microcredit programmes.

“Cash transfers work but require strong government support, oversight and community participation,” he adds. “What we need in Pakistan is transparency in terms of implementation and reduction in corruption.”

Another innovative way to tackle the malnutrition issue is the health star system adapted in Australia. Its official website states, “The Health Star Rating system is a front-of-pack labelling system developed for use in Australia and New Zealand.”

A committee with representatives from Australian state and territory governments, industry, public health and consumer groups were tasked with developing the ratings.

Those companies that choose to adopt the stars on their packaging will first have to input their product’s nutritional information into a calculator available on the official website, based on which stars shall be assigned to the product. The more the stars, the healthier the choice.

The benefit of the system is the visual representation of the nutritional value of the product, which can aid behaviour change. For Sindh, with an overall literacy rate of 55pc (36pc in rural areas), visual representations along with an effective initial awareness-raising mass media campaign can have a substantial impact.

Majyd Aziz, a Pakistani industrialist and the current president of the Employers’ Federation of Pakistan, was intrigued by the concept and expressed interest in publicising it among the members of the federation.

When asked about implementing such a system with the government though, he seemed highly reluctant. “The best way to implement such a thing is if there is an organisation to spearhead the process. “However, if the government gets involved and a board is made it must have greater private sector representation or the idea will get stuck in bureaucratic nonsense. High-level officers won’t attend meetings and because of low-level representation plans will never pan out.”

Whatever the case may be, the traditional distrust between the public and private spheres has no place in the urgency of the situation.

With innovative projects already in place the world over, it is for Pakistani leaders and those working on nutrition to seek out, study and implement them in ways best suited to our local cultural sensibilities.

Time is running out. We must take smart action, fast.

The situation in Sindh

Infant mortality rate is 82 deaths per 1,000 live births

Under-five mortality rate is 104 deaths per 1,000 live births.

More than four out of ten children under the age of five are underweight (42pc)

17pc are classified as severely underweight

Almost half of children under five years (48pc) are stunted or short for their age

One quarter (24pc) children are severely stunted.

15pc of the children are wasted or thin for their height and

1 pc of children are overweight or too heavy for their height

35pc of children age 12-23 months received all the recommended vaccinations by 12 months of age which reflects an improvement compared to DHS 2012 findings of 29pc— MICS 2014

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1401803>

#### CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING FOOD SECURITY POLICY

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 16th, 2018

Mohiuddin Aazim

THE federal cabinet has approved the national food security policy, and the Ministry of National Food Security and Research is now initiating the process for its implementation and preparation of an action plan.

While disclosing this at a recent meeting of a National Assembly standing committee, the senior most official of the ministry also highlighted some key features of the policy.

The policy acknowledges food security as the first and foremost element of national security. According to the food ministry's secretary, its main objective is to ensure a modern and efficient food production and distribution system that can best contribute towards food security and nutrition in terms of availability, access, utilisation and stability.

He further said that more specific objectives of the policy are alleviating poverty, eradicating hunger and malnutrition, promoting sustainable food production systems and making agriculture more productive, profitable, climate-resilient and competitive.

The policy will focus on increasing farmers' access to quality inputs like seeds, fertilisers and agricultural machinery, he said, adding that the policy also includes plans to address emergencies and disaster management.

Just like in everything else these days, many people find an element of surprise in the approval of this important policy as it has come towards the fag end of the PML-N government. They fear that implementing the policy and creating an action plan for this purpose may consume another few weeks, throwing the ball in the court of the caretaker government.

In an ideal scenario, the caretakers would be focused on holding elections and would find little time for such a long-term policy. However, the newly elected government may backtrack from or restructure some essentials of the policy rest.

Implementing the food security policy requires harmony among provincial and federal authorities, something which is visibly very low ahead of elections and amid growing intervention of non-political forces in the political administration.

Implementing the food security policy requires harmony among provincial and federal authorities, something which seems to be missing ahead of elections and amid growing intervention of non-political forces in the political administration

Furthermore, smaller provinces are fearful and sceptical. Who knows how the process of implementing the policy is moving? Who is calling the shots?

From where additional input into policy has come in? “We are yet to get clear answers to these questions,” laments a senior Sindh government official.

“Lots of things might have happened behind the doors and might still be happening. Let’s see what’s in store for the future.”

While implementing the food security policy, two issues are critical and politically sensitive. One relates to CPEC agricultural development zones and the second relates to land and water resource management, senior officials in Sindh and Balochistan agriculture departments tell Dawn on condition of anonymity. Originally, one of the requirements of food security policy was formulation of a long-term national plan for ensuring judicious distribution and efficient use of water across the country. That is going to become a big challenge as implementation.

Similarly, any decision regarding the creation of CPEC agricultural development zones for mutual benefit of Pakistan and China is bound to kick up huge controversies. And, these controversies may not remain limited to an interprovincial race for hosting such zones to get maximum benefits.

Officials of smaller provinces fear growing intervention of what they call non-political forces in this element of food security policy after the installation of a caretaker government next month. “But again this is just our apprehension and may hopefully turn out to be nothing more,” one of these officials admits.

The food security policy recognises four basic determinants of food security: food availability, food accessibility (both physical and economic), food utilisation and food stability. In each area, multiple issues exist and more issues might keep coming up as the implementation of the policy begins.

To ensure the availability and accessibility of food, there is a need to boost per-acre yields of food crops alongside increasing the mass of arable land, improving supply and storage infrastructure and rationalising the entire support price regime.

For boosting the yields, there is a need for modernising agriculture and ensuring constant flow of investment in agricultural research and development. That requires a massive push towards public-private partnership and foreign funding collaborations in addition to finding fiscal space both at federal and provincial levels.

“It is difficult to predict how soon this can happen but policymakers at both federal and provincial levels know how to address these and other issues,” says a senior official of the food ministry while advising that “media should stay positive”.

For promoting research and innovation, the newly approved food security policy suggests the creation of agriculture research boards in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan with technical assistance from federal institutions. In Punjab, the agriculture research board is already operational.

As the implementation of the policy begins, a certain clause of it will make it mandatory for federal and provincial authorities to readjust all other relevant policies to achieve food security, officials of Sindh agriculture department say.

So, one can expect that at federal and provincial levels budgeting for agriculture will improve and a certain percentage of their respective development plans — a minimum of 10pc according to original plans — will necessarily go to the agriculture sector.

In Pakistan, food availability (determined by production, stocks and net food trade) is not that bad. The problem area is unequal distributions across provinces and districts. Food security policy can really deliver if federal and provincial authorities recognise the root causes of distribution discrepancies and start taking corrective measures.

Livestock constitutes more than half of the agricultural economy, and one thorny issue in implementing food security policy is striking the right balance between promoting livestock without disturbing the crop sector.

Ensuring improved health and population of domestic animals is a must for sustainable dairy and meat supplies for our growing population and exports. To achieve that, it is necessary to find innovative and sustainable ways for feeding animals.

This requires growing more and better fodder crops, without allowing shrinkage in the area under cultivation of major and minor food crops, and developing composite animal feeds of high quality.

The Buffalo Breeders Association of Punjab has recently demanded 100pc import duty on dry milk powder to save local milk producing industry. One can imagine a slew of demands coming up from other sub-sectors of agriculture and livestock when the implementation of the food security policy goes into full gear.

Are federal and provincial governments prepared to tackle such conflicts of interests without compromising on the spirit of food security policy? Only time will tell.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1401780/challenges-in-implementing-food-security-policy>

#### FLAGSHIP PROGRAMMES UNDER FOOD POLICY

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 16th, 2018

Amin Ahmed

The National Food Security Policy approved by the federal cabinet will form part of the agricultural development strategy for the twelfth five-year plan (2018-23). It will help improve agricultural productivity and bridge the yield gap by the systematic application of better inputs and technology.

It is the first policy of the Ministry of National Food Security and National Research since its creation after the 13th amendment to the Constitution. However, it took five years to finalise the policy and the cabinet approval was accorded at the fag end of PML-N government's tenure. The previous PPP government also made the draft policy public at the end of its tenure in 2013.

The food ministry has yet to officially launch the policy.

The next step is the formulation of a plan of action to implement the policy. Spokesperson for the food ministry, Dr Javed Humayun, says the ministry is evolving an implementation strategy involving all stakeholders.

The policy implementation is expected to help in promoting value-added food production while creating a new class of agricultural entrepreneurs

Some elements of the policy relating to measures to reduce the cost of production will form part of the proposals being submitted to the Ministry of Finance for inclusion in the budgetary measures for fiscal year 2018-19, he says.

It was Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Sartaj Aziz who took special interest in the final phase of the report and wants to include important elements of the policy in the next five-year plan.

Elements of seeking financial and technical support from international organisations and the United Nations would be incorporated in the next five-year plan, sources say.

A series of national flagship programmes for agricultural development and food security has been developed under the policy, said Dr Muhammad Azeem Khan, member (agriculture), planning commission. Dr Azeem is among the key architects of the policy.

The policy elements will help achieve the four aims which are conducive to improving the four pillars of food security (availability, accessibility, utilisation and stability) as well as the final aim of the policy, which is to ensure stable and adequate nourishment and nutrition for the healthy life of all segments of the population in the country.

The key areas for agricultural, economic and technical cooperation between Pakistan and China will be determined by fully considering the comparative advantage and cooperation needs. There will be an opportunity to produce high-tech, value-added agricultural products at international standards for different potential markets. The commodities that can be potentially exported to China include cereals, dairy, eggs, honey, animals, tobacco, meat, sea food, fruits and nuts.

Officials of the ministry expect that the policy implementation will help in promoting value-added food production while creating a new class of agricultural entrepreneurs. As a result, the availability of diversified food products will increase, which will help in improving the economic access of food to socially deprived communities living in marginal and remote areas.

The policy emphasised that Pakistan needs to build strong resilient agriculture sector to cope with climate change risks since projections indicate that there will be greater variability in weather, with more frequent extreme events such as floods and droughts. Much of the impact of these changes will be on the agriculture sector, which needs mechanisms to cope and adapt.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1401779>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 9TH TO APRIL 15TH 2018

**FORTIFICATION: A SOLUTION TO 'HIDDEN HUNGER'**

Business Recorder, 9 April 2018

One of the major types of malnutrition in countries like Pakistan is characterised by micronutrient deficiencies. According to the National Nutrition Survey (NNS) 2011 (the only recent one), more than half of the women and children suffered from micronutrient malnutrition back then. And the situation has little changed since then as indicated by the country's worsening position on various global health, food and nutrition indicators.

What makes food fortification extremely useful? Micronutrient deficiencies involve a shortage of essential vitamins or minerals that might not show in early stages or might not be visible for a long period of time but have far-reaching impact on human health. These deficiencies have been particularly noticed in pregnant and non-pregnant women and children. And while the actions needed to address malnutrition are innumerable and multilevel, a key proven method to account for micronutrient deficiencies is food fortification.

Fortification or food enrichment is like hitting the bull's eye when making food nutritional by adding essential minerals and vitamins. Governments all around the world and international organisations have identified various kinds of food fortification at household, community, industrial and mass level to address these nutritional deficiencies. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have identified fortification as a key strategy in reducing the prevalence of malnutrition in underdeveloped countries.

Given the situation in Pakistan, investing in targeted nutrition and nutrition-sensitive interventions such as staple food fortification can prove instrumental in tackling malnutrition and undernourishment in children and women especially for lacking areas like iron, zinc, folic acid, iodine, vitamin A, vitamin B12, and vitamin D.

Food fortification is a cost-effective strategy that requires no change in eating habits or purchasing patterns. While there has been some activity in food fortification, it's ironic that Pakistan still faces iodine deficiency that has seen significant improvement globally. The government's Vision 2025 envisaged to reduce food-insecure population from 60 percent to 30 percent. For this, the plan involved innovative and cost-effective strategies like ready-to-use fortified food for breast feeding mothers and pregnant women; nutrition specific and sensitive interventions; ready to use fortified food supplementation, fortification and bio-fortification among others.

Fortification of staples like wheat flour, oil and salt can substantially enhance micronutrients in food. The last economic survey highlighted that in addition to Universal Salt Iodisation (USI) Program in 110 districts through Public Private Partnership, Food Fortification Program in Pakistan (FFP) would be set up, to provide support to industry to adequately fortify wheat flour and edible oil/ghee, besides helping the government to improve food fortification regulatory system, and help in raising awareness to formulate policies to combat micronutrient deficiencies in Pakistan.

So far, FFP Punjab has been launched with 132 flour mills registered with the programme, which is 15 percent of flour being fortified; and 33 oil/ghee mill registered with the program, which is 89 percent oil/ghee fortified.

After National Fortification Alliance (NFA), Provincial Fortification Alliances have been established by all provinces in 2016. And while there has been some activity regarding Universal Salt Iodisation (USI) legislation and rules on the protection of breastfeeding, the federal and the provincial governments must hastily enact laws for iodized salt.

There is still a need for a collective political will, a comprehensive food fortification policy, mandatory standards and legislations, technical capacity building of the industry, and increasing demand and access to fortified food and staples.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/09/2-page/709569-news.html>

**SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES MAR PROSPECTS FOR 800M POOR PEOPLE: UN**  
Dawn, April 15th, 2018

ISLAMABAD: In a report released ahead of the G20 and the spring meetings of the World Bank and IMF, the United Nations has warned that prospects for around 800 million of the world's poorest people remain dire.

The global economy is experiencing a moderate upturn, and momentum around sustainable investing is growing, but the vast majority of investment is still short-term oriented and commitments by the international community to create sustainable economies are not being met, according to "Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects," the 2018 comprehensive annual progress report on how to finance the Sustainable Development Goals.



There is an increasing interest in socially responsible investing, but that is no substitute for a broader transformation in the financial system. The report states that the current system rewards investors, financiers and project managers that prioritise short-term profits.

Similarly, policy makers are excessively focused on short-term considerations. But there is a price to pay. Infrastructure projects are shelved in favour of short-term priorities. Small businesses and women remain excluded from the financial system.

“The good economic news in some regions masks the very real risk that the poorest will be left behind,” said Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. “There is no room for complacency,” he said.

“If we don’t invest in infrastructure projects like bridges, roads and sewage systems, if the poorest and women are cut off from access to credit and other financial services, we have little prospect of achieving our global goals”, he added.

Per capita growth remains negative or insignificant in many countries where the poverty rate is already high, entrenching inequality.

Overcoming the short-term outlook of many investors is a complex but urgent issue, the report says.

Pension funds, insurance companies and other institutional investors hold around \$80 trillion in assets. But the majority of their resources are invested in liquid assets, such as listed equities and bonds in developed countries. Investment in infrastructure still represents less than three per cent of pension fund assets, with investment in sustainable infrastructure in developing countries even lower, report estimates.

The lack of long-term investment horizons also means that major risks, such as those from climate change, are not incorporated into decision-making.

According to the report, the solution lies in a multifaceted approach. It includes changing payment practices: the compensation of financial advisors and portfolio managers is too often linked to short term results. More transparency also helps: some countries now require all listed companies to disclose financial risks they face from climate change.

Short-sighted policies also result in a lack of access to finance for countries in urgent need. Support for countries affected by disasters is often too little, too late. Innovative financial instruments exist that provide quicker access to funding.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1401741>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1ST TO APRIL 8TH 2018  
INFECTIOUS DISEASE, MALNUTRITION CLAIM SIX MORE INFANT LIVES IN THAR  
Dawn, April 1st, 2018

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Another six infants died in Thar over the past two days because of viral infection and malnutrition, hospital sources said on Saturday.

The babies were under treatment at Civil Hospital Mithi and other government-run health facilities. The number of children who died in March under similar circumstances reached 47.

According to sources, the parents concerned complained about the lack of facilities, including the shortage of life-saving drugs, in the government-run hospitals. They called upon the high-ups to provide medicines at basic health units in their villages so that they did not have to travel for miles to reach the Mithi hospital in scorching heat along with their babies.

Despite repeated attempts, neither the district health officer nor civil surgeon of civil hospital Mithi could be contacted for comment.

Earlier, the Sindh government had directed the local health officials not to share any details with journalists after the chief justice of Pakistan took suo motu notice of deaths of five children in the Mithi hospital in April last year.

Health and nutrition experts in Thar believe that malnutrition, poverty, frequent droughts and child marriages are the main factors behind the babies' deaths.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1398872/infection-malnutrition-claim-six-more-infant-lives-in-thar>

## MALNUTRITION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR KP'S CHILDREN

Muhammad Iqbal Khan

Dawn, April 02, 2018

ACCESS to proper nutrition is one of the fundamental human rights and a precondition for overall human health and well-being. Adequate nutrition, especially in early childhood, is a prerequisite for optimal physical growth, brain development and the survival of children, leading to sustainable social and economic growth of a country.

Well-nourished children are better able to grow and learn, to participate and contribute to their communities and are resilient in the face of disease, disasters and other global crises.

On the other hand, malnutrition — in all its forms including under-nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and over-nutrition — not only affects human health and development but also poses high economic, social and human development costs on individuals, families, communities and nations.

Malnourished children are much more likely to die as a result of a common childhood disease than those who are adequately nourished. Nutritional deficiencies in early childhood not only reduce a child's chance of survival, but they can also have long-term consequences on cognitive and social abilities, school performance and work productivity. Malnutrition affects millions of children and contributes to an estimated 3.1 million child deaths each year, accounting for over a third of all deaths of children globally.

In KP, more than 85pc children aged six to 23 months do not receive the recommended amount and quality of diet, mainly due to ignorance

The economic consequences represent losses of 11 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) every year in Africa and Asia, according to World Economics data, whereas preventing malnutrition delivers \$16 in returns on investment of every \$1 spent.

Improvements in nutrition will contribute significantly to reducing poverty, and to achieving health, education, and employment goals. The co-occurrence of undernutrition, micronutrient malnutrition and obesity and overweight poses challenges and underscores the reality that malnutrition is a global phenomenon, affecting virtually all countries, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Malnutrition results from the interaction of poor-quality diets and poor-quality health and care environments and behaviours, which are shaped in part by a host of underlying factors, such as political instability, poor economic development, conflict, inequality, and some dimensions of globalisation.

Achieving the goal of optimal nutrition encompasses the prevention, control and treatment of undernutrition, micronutrient malnutrition and overweight and obesity, promoting optimal care and feeding practices (eg exclusive breastfeeding) and dietary diversity, and addressing food safety and quality, and ensuring access to and use of health services and a safe, hygienic environment.

Pakistan in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in specific have a huge burden of all forms of malnutrition. Every second child (an estimated 800,000 children under the age of five years) in the province is stunted (having low average height for a given age) and every sixth child (an estimated 100,000 children) is wasted.

The situation of micronutrient deficiencies is alarmingly high in children under the age of five years, with 68.5pc having vitamin A deficiency, 49pc being anaemic and 45.4pc having zinc deficiency.

Only 40.5pc of newborn babies receive mother's milk within one hour of birth while 38pc infants less than six months of age receive exclusively mother's milk, which means that more than 60pc of children under six months receive mixed feeding.

Recent in-depth analysis of complementary feeding practices in the country using data from the Pakistan Demographic Health Survey 2012-13 showed more than 85pc children aged six to 23 months in KP do not receive the recommended amount and quality of diet, mainly due to ignorance regarding types, quantity and frequency of recommended complementary feeding practices.

Awareness among masses regarding nutrition issues remains low and ideal nutrition practices remain very weak. Nutrient-rich food groups are rarely consumed, less than one in five children consume meat or fish, legumes or vitamin-A rich fruits and vegetables.

Common risk factors for poor child feeding are poor access to health and nutrition services in the community in addition to poverty. This underlies the need to improve the capacity of programmes, health professionals and community workers to support good complementary feeding practices.

The current status of malnutrition in KP can be translated into around a million children under five years of age suffering from stunting, anaemia or iodine deficiencies suffering deficits in mental and physical development, which may lead to lower school performance and lower productivity as adults, depressing the gross domestic productivity.

Realising the gravity of the situation, the Planning and Development Department of KP, under the oversight of a high-level steering committee chaired by the additional chief secretary, formulated nutrition policy guidance notes and a multi-sector integrated nutrition strategy to holistically address the problem of malnutrition in the province.

The Scaling Up Nutrition Cell in the planning and development department established in September 2016 is coordinating the implementation of the multi-sector integrated nutrition strategy encompassing both nutrition-specific interventions and nutrition-sensitive strategies through relevant departments, including health, education, local government, public health engineering, social welfare, food and agriculture departments.

In the current year, a multi-sector integrated nutrition project titled 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Stunting Prevention and Rehabilitation Integrated Nutrition Gain', or KP SPRING, was approved to reduce stunting in the province over the next three years.

The project will strengthen the capacity of different relevant departments in nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific intervention and establish a coordination mechanism through District Integrated Nutrition Committees and Steering Committee at the provincial level for effectively implementing KP SPRING.

#### What is malnutrition

Malnutrition is an abnormal physiological condition caused by deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in energy, protein and/or other nutrients.

It manifests itself in many different ways:

**Under-nutrition:** A condition in which the body contains lower than normal amounts of one or more nutrients, ie deficiencies in macronutrients and/or micronutrients.

It encompasses stunting, wasting and deficiencies of essential vitamins and minerals.

Individuals suffer from under-nutrition if their diet does not provide adequate calories and protein for growth and maintenance or they are unable to fully utilise the food they eat due to illness.

**Over-nutrition:** It includes overweight and obesity. Over-nutrition is caused by consuming too many calories.

**Diet-related:** non-communicable chronic diseases due to excess intake of sugar, salt or cholesterol.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1398928/malnutrition-and-its-consequences-for-kps-children>

#### SINDH'S CHILD MALNUTRITION

Dawn, April 3rd, 2018

It is widely accepted that political parties are trusted to govern with responsibility to improve the well-being of underprivileged communities. In this regard, the ruling PPP government's performance in Sindh has been so abysmal when it comes to preventing food insecurity, disease and early marriages that women in the province fare even worse in terms of malnutrition than their counterparts in Nigeria.

The death on Saturday of six infants in Thar, because of malnutrition conditions, was a grim reminder of the alarming levels of child undernourishment in Sindh. Evidence of child neglect has been apparent for years in Thar where malnutrition has been linked to the deaths of at least 155 children so far this year; almost 50 fatalities occurred in March alone. This is a damning indictment of a government known for repeatedly making promises to improve things.

What action has it taken to address the persistent lack of health facilities, vaccinations, clean water and the chronic malnutrition in Thar? Lately, more than 200 children in Sindh also contracted measles; eight children have died so far without access to medicines. Such a multifaceted health crisis warrants severe censure of a government devoid of a conscience.

Meanwhile, instead of waiting for the judiciary to intervene in executive responsibilities — in this case the increasing child deaths in Tharparkar — political parties must improve their performance. Recent UN statistics portray a disturbing picture: 48.1pc of women are food-insecure in Pakistan; and 36.6pc of men are undernourished.

Only a discerning government knows that ignoring the persistent alarm bells is to the detriment of future generations and building a future workforce. For starters, what is required is increasing access to safe water and sanitation for more families. Also, education on nutrition awareness is imperative.

Ensuring nutritious food distribution through vouchers until local communities become food-sufficient is a workable approach. Without pro-poor policies, the sorry reality is that Pakistan will miss the UN's 2030 target of ending childhood malnutrition.

## BISP, WFP SIGN MOU: '1000 DAYS PARTNERSHIP AGAINST MALNUTRITION'

Business Recorder, 4 April 2018

ISLAMABAD: Executive Director United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) David M Beasley called on Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday at Prime Minister's Office.

The prime minister stated that Pakistan has long association with WFP and enjoys unique donor recipient status at WFP. Pakistan is WFP's largest host government donor in the world and is paying US\$ 50 million to the current Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRRO), the Prime Minister added. Chairperson BISP Marvi Memon was also present in the meeting, said a press release.

The Prime Minister felicitated the Executive Director, WFP and appreciated the efforts being done by WFP to achieve its overarching objectives worldwide. The Prime Minister also appreciated the role of WFP in Pakistan for being the leading humanitarian organization for fighting hunger, delivering food assistance and working to improve nutrition and build resilience.

On this occasion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and WFP titled "1000 DAYS PARTNERSHIP AGAINST MALNUTRITION". The Memorandum of Understanding for 2018–2022 is aligned with WFP's strategic objectives in support of Pakistan's own development strategies –Pakistan's vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The key objectives of the MoU include improvement in education enrollment through revitalizing the school meal system, to improve emergency preparedness response mechanism, to enable the social protection of Pakistan more nutrition sensitive by working on Nutrition Conditionality Program and to nurture public private partnership to ensure long-term sustainability of the program. Finbarr Curran, Country Director WFP and Omar Hamid Khan, Secretary BISP signed the MOU.

ED, WFP appreciated the role of BISP in context to its contribution in the education, poverty reduction and women issues. David M. Beasley also ensured his organizational support and facilitation in this sector, with the hope of further strengthening the initiatives taken by the Government of Pakistan.—PR

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/04/20-page/708770-news.html>

## UNDERNOURISHMENT IN PAKISTAN – DAUNTING REALITIES

Unfortunately, malnutrition is a public health challenge that the country is facing. Stunting, wasting and malnutrition are widespread in Pakistan. According to Food Security Assessment Survey (FSA), 2016, 18 percent of the population in Pakistan is undernourished in one form or the other.

From the economic perspective, undernutrition erodes the very foundation of growth in the country; people lose energy, strength, cognitive capacities and the drive to contribute towards economic output.

From low productivity to increased health costs to lost future labour, the economic cost of malnutrition stands at around \$7.6 billion, or 3 percent of GDP every year for Pakistan, an agri-based country – something that should force policy makers burn the midnight oil in curating and implementing policies conducive to improving the situation.

While some work is being done (and we will look at nutrition from the political lens some other time), a great deal of effort is still missing. To understand malnourishment or undernutrition in Pakistan and address the challenge swiftly and correctly, it is important to identify the core reasons or factors behind. Let's look at some that have been ignored time and again in policy making.

Looking at the poverty numbers, one can see that poverty levels have come down from 57.9 percent to 29.5 percent between 1999 and 2014. Even multidimensional poverty that uses different factors like education, health and standard of living to determine acute poverty has come down in the country.

Then why is it so that even though poverty in the country is generally declining, the incidence of poor nutrition is climbing at a rapid pace? One reason for poor nutrition is rising disparity despite falling poverty levels.

Whether its health, education or standard of living, there is a widening schism between provinces, and areas within provinces proven through various studies. Inefficient and unequal food distribution systems and access across provinces too come in here as income inequality continue to make the rich better off, while the poor continue to slide down the hill.

As a result of this income inequality, food insecurity is a key issue in the country, despite increase in food production and some stabilisation of food prices recently. Also gender disparity (continuing to escalate in Pakistan) is another factor for developing countries as women generally have limited control over and access to resources and finances.

Unsuitable or insufficient food intake is the most unnerving factor behind malnutrition in the country. There is a high prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies – shortage of essential vitamins or minerals- indicating inadequate diet in children as well as adults especially mothers.

According to WFP's recent summary report, "Fill the Nutrient Gap Pakistan", around two thirds of children in Pakistan are anemic; one third have iron deficiency anaemia; there is a high incidence of deficiencies in zinc, calcium, vitamin A and vitamin D in women; vitamin D deficiency affects over two thirds of women, while anaemia and calcium deficiencies occur in more than half of women.

Another key factor that directly and indirectly impacts undernutrition in Pakistan is inadequate access to water, sanitation and hygiene. Clean water supply, sanitation, and hygiene are important for preventing malnutrition due to their direct impact on intestinal infections and diarrhea.

So what needs to be done? While it has been all said before, fewer policies and recommendations have actually moved from paper to action. There is a need to improve food security and nutrition adequacy through education and awareness building, targeted food distribution schemes and livelihood enhancement programmes. Better distribution of not just food but also employment and education needs to be pursued to address the disparities. Awareness campaigns and action on gender disparity can also improve women empowerment, which in turn can address some undernourishment issues.

At the fiscal level, pro-poor and equitable policies like reducing indirect taxation that largely burden the poor need to be taken to the discussion table. Better farming techniques that can result in better crops, and hence better food distribution by the government can go a long way in addressing the issues of food security.

Provinces that now have the task, need to buckle up and get going when it comes to curating policies. Food security and undernourishment should not be looked at in conjunction with other issues; 3 percent to GDP is a huge cost and needs to be dealt in isolation and on priority basis.

Improving access to water, sanitation facility and hygiene practices is not only necessary for the country's rising water crisis but is highly linked to how malnutrition is addressed.

Legislation on food fortification, scaling up of micro-nutrients to children and Iron/folate to pregnant lactating women, and increasing the supply of iodized salt along with increased civic education efforts to raise awareness on the importance of iodine are some areas that need attention.

Fortification is a powerful tool to address malnourishment precisely as it has played a significant part in reducing micronutrient deficiencies across the globe. Common fortification initiatives include adding micronutrients such as vitamin A and D, folate or iodine to foods like flour, salt and rice.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2018/04/05/409532/undernourishment-in-pakistan-daunting-realities/>

## NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY POLICY APPROVED BY FEDERAL GOVT

Business Recorder, 6 April 2018

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research has been informed that federal cabinet has granted approval to National Food Security Policy (NFSP) so the Ministry of National Food Security and Research is now initiating process for implementation and preparation of an action plan accordingly.

The committee met here with MNA Malik Shakir Bashir Awan in the chair on Thursday. The secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research briefed the committee about the implementation status of the previous recommendations of the committee. The committee deferred 'The National Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health Regulatory Authority Bill, 2017' till its next meeting.

The committee was also informed that National Food Security Policy was developed with specific objectives for alleviating poverty and eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

The secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research gave a briefing to the committee on National Food Security Policy (NFSP).

He informed that the food security is first and foremost element of national security and requires a robust policy framework. He said that objective of the NFSP is to ensure a modern and efficient food production and distribution system that can best contribute towards food security and nutrition in terms of availability, access, utilization and stability.

He further said that more specific objectives of the policy are alleviation of poverty, eradicating hunger and malnutrition, promotion of sustainable food production systems and making agriculture more productive, profitable, climate-resilient and competitive.

He also informed about the measures to be taken under the NFSP. He said that the policy will focus on access of farmers to quality inputs like seeds, fertilizers and agricultural machinery. He said that the policy will also include plans to address emergencies and disaster management.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/04/06/3-page/709020-news.html>

## PAKISTAN'S MALNUTRITION CRISIS

Rebecca Tariq

The Express Tribune, April 7, 2018

Some 58% of households in Pakistan are food insecure out of which 9.8% are food insecure with hunger, according to the National Nutrition Survey 2011. Over the past few years, malnutrition has emerged as one of the world's leading challenges with regard to food security. It should come as no surprise that the menace of malnutrition is especially prevalent in Pakistan, given the poor socioeconomic conditions.

Undernutrition, simply put, is a condition in which our bodies are deprived of all the necessary nutrients, which can only be addressed through a balanced diet. Our diets in Pakistan are barely what we can classify as 'balanced diets'. This is an issue that arises directly as a result of food insecurity. Food insecurity is one of the greatest challenges faced by Pakistan, according to the Food Security and Nutrition Strategic Review for Pakistan in 2017. The overall prevalence of undernourishment is estimated to be about 18% of the entire population.

The high percentage of food insecurity poses a direct threat to our nation and has resulted in a number of detrimental health-related issues, women and children under the age of five being the major sufferers. The health risks associated with malnutrition are morbidity and infections which lead to mortality. The three major hits that we are facing as a nation are stunted growths in children, anaemia in women who are of reproductive age and obesity in adults.

The National Nutrition Survey 2011 sheds light on some disturbing statistics: 1/3rd of Pakistani children are underweight and iron deficient, 15% are wasted and 14% women are either thin or wasted. Certain deficiencies can be boiled down to the absence of three essential micronutrients: vitamin A, zinc and iron. However, what we fail to understand is that the major source for such essential micronutrients is itself often deficient in them.

Maize, a highly profitable crop that has a yield two times higher than other cereal crops, is deficient in zinc, according to Dr Tahir of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. This deficiency in the crop can be attributed to deficiencies in soil and hence, it becomes imperative that governing bodies put in place policies which support investment in useful fertilisers.

Regulation of such policies will not just help Pakistan to turn over its current dreadful economic landscape, but will also help alleviate the epidemic of malnutrition that has been prevailing for decades and experiences a surge every year.

Pakistan was not able to meet its millennium development goals by 2015 and still hasn't because a major chunk of the GDP, which is around 3%, gets dedicated to the malnutrition crisis. Economist Yunus Kamran advocates that better nutrition enhances economic growth, but also argues that Pakistan needs strong economic theories and models to formalise this relationship.

The disparity in the nutritional status between the urban and rural divide is much less and varies widely across the country. Forty to 50% of the periodic seasonal food insecurity reported is from regions like Balochistan, Sindh, South Punjab, parts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Fata.

The food insecurity seen in these regions is an inherent cause of poor and unhygienic living conditions, with little access to safe drinking water and no access to adequate sanitation facilities. This when compounded with poor access to healthcare facilities makes the situation pretty gruesome.

With malnutrition so widely prevalent with a high economic cost, Pakistan ranks below its neighbours like China, India and Bangladesh, according to international donor services.

This is also supported by a report prepared by the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organisation, which highlights how the prevalence of stunting — a reported consequence of malnutrition — has dropped considerably in India, China and Bangladesh, except Pakistan where the issue has been exacerbated. Stunting isn't alone in marking such a trend.

Anaemia and obesity are following the trail, begging for an urgent action to be taken. But the lack of political will and the leadership is delaying this call for action as the last National Nutrition Survey (NNS) was done back in 2011 under the nutritional information system.



Although the NNS of 2011 resulted in a major rethink of the nutritional services in the Pakistan Integrated Nutrition Strategy — the endorsement of national breastfeeding standards and other projects like the incorporation of nutrition studies in university curriculum, acknowledging food fortification as one way to address the existing micronutrient deficiencies, training workshops for healthcare workers and integration of vital services for children and women — almost nothing has changed. There have been reports that the government is soon going to carry out another NNS and that is a welcome news. However, we must not be surprised if the indicators have grown worse because the government still hasn't implemented a multi-sectoral nutrition strategy.

The previous research outlines many underlying factors actively participating in contributing towards the issue of malnutrition. These include poverty, low literacy rate, lack of decision-making power given to women, inadequate living conditions and poor access to healthcare facilities, but fail to address and identify the reason behind greater disparity observed in province-wise profiles of the country. It also falls short in establishing a clear relationship between poverty, under-nutrition and economic growth.

Undoubtedly, fresh research, along with perhaps a new approach, is required to holistically inquire about and address the issue of malnutrition still prevalent in Pakistan. However, until both federal and provincial governments take note and formulate a cohesive and coherent action plan for combating malnutrition, this scourge will continue to invade the lives of poor Pakistanis.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1679287/6-pakistans-malnutrition-crisis>

## May 2018

### *NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 21st TO MAY 27TH 2018*

#### **Malnutrition claims two children's lives in Thar**

CHACHRO: Two more children died due to food shortage in Tharparkar's Chachro on Saturday, taking death toll to 34 in current month of May.

According to details, more than 70 children are still under treatment at various hospitals in the district. Malnourished families have started migrating to Badin and other areas as Tharparkar has no longer any fodder for their cattle. The locals are migrating to Thar's adjoining areas for fodder owing to Sindh government's inadequate measures.

Tharparkar is a home to more than 60 lac cattle which provide source of income to residents. However, locals have started migrating to other areas as fodder for their cattle is exhausted before the expected time. Famine-struck people have demanded of the government to announce a package for their ease. In 2014, the Sindh government announced establishment of Thar Development Authority to address the problem, however, the draft is still pending for approval.—INP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/27/3-page/719084-news.html>

### *NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 7TH TO MAY 13TH 2018*

#### **BAJAUR POSTAL WORKERS SCAM RS62 MILLION FROM BISP**

The Express Tribune, 7 May 2018

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Sunday unearthed massive embezzlement of funds to the tune of Rs62.57 million in the distribution of money under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Bajaur Agency of Federally Administered Tribal Area (Fata).

According to the final source report of the FIA, available with Daily Express, Ghulam Muhammad and Nazir Khan allegedly misappropriated funds on account of the BISP programme and transferred them out of Pakistan illegally.

“Ghulam Muhammad and Nazir Khan are both employees of Pakistan Post Office, Bajaur, and allegedly [have] connections with proscribed organisations and have reportedly been facilitating them,” reveals the report.

The report further says that the record regarding funds released to the people of Bajaur from BISP through Post office was obtained from BISP.

Moreover, NADRA was requested to categorise the Computerised National Identity Cards (CNIC) provided by the welfare organisation into valid CNICs and blocked, CNICs of confirm Afghan nationals and suspect Afghan nationals.

There were 472 CNICs against which BISP funds were disbursed through the Bajaur Post Office, the report added.

“According to the record of BISP and in the light of CNICs record provided by NADRA, it transpired that, Rs62,569,500 have been skimmed from state exchequer on account of BISP funds since March 2017, with the connivance of Ghulam Muhammad, Nazir Khan, Nazeerur Rehman Muhammad, and other employees of Pakistan Post in Bajaur.

The categorical breakup of the embezzled amount, as detailed in the FIA report, shows that Rs288,900 was disbursed under 39 CNICs to “confirmed Afghan Nationals”, Rs87,500 were disbursed under 15 CNICs of other non-national suspects, Rs725,800 were disbursed under 55 blocked CNICs; Rs114,300 was disbursed to 21 CNICs under fake particulars; Rs255,700 was disbursed under 27 CNICs in a category called temporarily cleared; Rs61,097,300 was disbursed to 315 invalid or wrong CNICs.

It has been suggested in the FIA report that the instant inquiry is to be transferred to Anti-Corruption Circle, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Islamabad Zone, for onward proceedings.

“The instant inquiry falls within jurisdiction of Anti-Corruption Circle (ACC) of FIA Islamabad because government funds have been found embezzled by government employees,” states the report, adding “However, during the course of inquiry if any evidence regarding terrorist financing or money laundering came on record, the matter may be referred to Counter Terrorism Wing FIA Islamabad to the extent terrorist financing.”

The findings of the FIA report suggest that since theft of huge amount from the state exchequer unearthed on account of BISP in a small agency of Fata, which has small population as compared to other districts of Pakistan, it would be appropriate if a forensic audit of BISP with thorough scrutiny of CNICs of beneficiaries is conducted across the country for BISP funds disbursements from both banks and post offices.

“It would be appropriate if the matter is forwarded to all zonal offices to ascertain irregular payments under BISP,” the FIA report concludes.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1703907/1-bajaur-postal-workers-scam-rs62-million-bisp/>

## BISP'S RURAL LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

Business Recorder, 12 May 2018

“I am delighted that Nestle Pakistan has joined hands with BISP to support women beneficiaries by providing them an opportunity to earn better livelihood by selling Nestle products in addition to the income support given by BISP,” said Marvi Memon while addressing the launching ceremony of Rural Livelihood Program on Friday.

The event was also attended by Secretary BISP Omar Hamid Khan, Country Director World Bank Patchamuthu Illangovan, and Managing Director Nestle Pakistan Bruno Olierhoek.

“Women are the core of any society, and to empower the women leader of the household in Pakistan means more than life to me,” said Memon.

“I feel proud engaging the unheard voices in the mainstream, to uplift the poorest and vulnerable women of the society, in Pakistan. BISP is the face of women empowerment not only in Pakistan, but also at the International forums,” she added.

More than 200 BISP women beneficiaries, who are working as Nestle Sales agents in rural areas of Punjab and Sindh were present on the occasion, and were awarded souvenirs by the chief guest.

The core concept of this initiative is to encourage public-private partnership to increase the employment opportunities for the poorest segment of the country to earn better livelihood. Secretary Omar Hamid Khan said this is just start of the beginning and BISP is committed to increase such public-private partnerships under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) from the private sector.

It is pertinent to mention here that the signed MoU is in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) No. 1 & 5- No Poverty and Gender Equality. “It has been proven, as evidence by our partnership with Nestle that when women take charge and control of their financial circumstances their decision making plays a key role in graduating their families out of poverty.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/05/20180512370910/>

## MALNUTRITION

Syed Bakhtiyar Kazmi

“Stunting early in a child’s life can cause irreversible damage to cognitive development and has educational, income, and productivity consequences that reach far into adulthood. The economic costs of under nutrition, in terms of lost national productivity and economic growth, are significant—ranging from 2 to 3% of GDP in some countries and up to 11% of GDP in Africa and Asia each year”- the World Bank.

The Government apparently is brainstorming on ways and means to achieve a rather ambitious target of 9% GDP growth in the near future; ambitious, because of two reasons. Firstly, we haven’t touched 9% growth in a few decades; for the record Pakistan’s highest GDP growth rate was 10.22% back in 1954. Secondly, a pure quantitative growth target perhaps is not the solution for Pakistan’s economic woes; growth brought about purely by consumption, even if 9%, might be a very costly affair for the nation’s economic conditions going forward. We can hardly afford the 6% growth. On the other hand, growth brought about by improvement in net trade, even half of this target, would be absolutely stupendous.

Apparently, or rather finally, the Pakistan Banking Council (PBC) is also waking up to the necessity of Government support for pursuing export oriented import substitution manufacturing industry in Pakistan. While the current demands of PBC, diplomatically, ask for renegotiating Free Trade Agreements, especially with China, and provide level playing field for domestic manufacturing, I venture a guess. Pretty soon domestic business will ask for outright protection from the government, and you know what, I support that!

Notwithstanding the importance of reducing the trade deficit, I perhaps have been made wiser now and subscribe to the World Bank’s solution for achieving higher GDP growth; getting rid of malnutrition. But let me flip it; with or without any impact on GDP growth, stunting due to malnutrition is shameful for any democratic government, as

rightly stated in the Budget Speech 2018-19. While the speech, admirably, also mentions an allocation of Rs 10 billion for a program that will end stunting, there remain associated ifs and buts.

Unfortunately, the importance of malnutrition for our governments can be gauged from the very fact that the last nutrition survey was carried out in 2011; apparently one is now being launched in 2018. I wish I am proven wrong on this one!

“Results from the 2011 National Nutrition Survey (NNS) indicated little change over the last decade in terms of core maternal and childhood nutrition indicators. With regard to micronutrient deficiencies, while iodine status had improved nationally, vitamin A status had deteriorated and there had been little or no improvement in other areas linked to micronutrient deficiencies.

The ratio of males to females was approximately 50.4% to 49.6% across Pakistan. A total of 45.7% of household heads were illiterate and 38.7% were workers or labourers. 15.5% of the population was unemployed – with higher rates in the urban population (18.9% urban unemployment, 14.0% rural unemployment). Using a standard questionnaire, the NNS 2011 indicated that 58.1% of households were food insecure nationally... . The National Nutrition Survey 2011 indicates that stunting, wasting and micronutrient malnutrition are endemic in Pakistan”- extracts from Executive Summary.

Notwithstanding that the survey seems to be challenging the literacy and unemployment rate in the country in one breath as well, whether or not Rs. 10 billion is sufficient to address an issue which is endemic is the bigger question. Except, how did we allow malnutrition to become endemic is the upsetting part; not only for democracies, but for all the governments since independence.

How we, as a nation, can have lived with the statistics given in the 2011 survey: Results showed that in Pakistan 43.7% of children were stunted. In rural areas stunting in children was higher (46.3 %) than in urban areas (36.9%). The wasting rate was 15.1% and the proportion of wasted children was lower in urban areas (12.7%) than in rural areas (16.1%). About 31.5% of the children were underweight, with higher rates in rural areas (33.3%).

I wish the government had focused on eradication of stunting in their first budget and not in the last; two months before they leave. After all, according to their own estimates, they just needed Rs 10 billion to end stunting. Nonetheless, whoever comes in next, needs to follow through with this commitment to end stunting, whatever it takes and however much it costs. Personally, I am ashamed too; ignorance is not a valid excuse in this case. I remain grateful to two gentlemen who brought this matter to my attention; thank you.

Dear readers, just when you think that you have unravelled the mystery of economic growth in the country, and decided that simultaneous investment in education and manufacturing, export oriented and import substitution, is the answer, you suddenly realize that the problem is deeper. Tackling stunting has to be the priority if we are to get anywhere with educating the masses.

Come next election, the intelligentsia needs to stop goofing about and focus on the real issues; malnutrition should be way up there on the top, in the list of the real issues faced by Pakistan.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/12/8-page/716460-news.html>

MALNOURISHMENT PERIL

Dawn, 13 May 2018

Javed Jabbar

WHEN this writer began voluntary work in the arid region of Tharparkar in February 1985, perhaps the first reason one became enduringly engaged with the area were the ultra thin, emaciated infants in the laps and arms of underfed teenage mothers. Though their eyes cast a spell, their faces were grim and gaunt.

Malnutrition has spanned generations and impacted parents as well as children. Fortunately, in the past three decades, global research, new knowledge and potentially effective solutions have emerged to create scope for alleviating malnourishment in Tharparkar, as also in those parts of Pakistan where poverty, ignorance and inaction still prevail.

Lack of appropriate nourishment exists even in the non-arid regions. There is inequitable distribution of wealth, income and food. There's very little food for too many mouths due to unwanted births and inaccessibility to family planning services. Girls, who prematurely become mothers, are second-priority recipients of choice food; males, including boys, come first in a misogynistic culture. There are anaemic mothers unable to provide even minimal levels of breast milk for, ideally, two years. There's no awareness of relatively low-cost food fortifications — many can't even afford them. Unhealthy food is consumed. The scale of the challenge is huge.

About 44 per cent of Pakistani children are reliably estimated by the Unicef to be suffering from malnutrition. This is not a transient illness that medicines can cure. Once the adverse effects of malnutrition are imprinted onto the molecules and muscles of infants and children, they become like permanently embedded organisms. They prevent the child from developing potential brain and body power, they stultify and suppress the spontaneous urge to grow freely and fully. A single cruel word — 'stunting' — can enslave a human being for life. Its very sound reflects the affliction's debilitating nature.

Beginnings shape future happenings. Only 38pc of infants under six months are breastfed. The percentage declines after the first six months, without an adequate supplementary diet compensating the loss of mother's milk. Research conclusively shows that there is also need for fortified food in the first 1,000 days. This writer's instinctive opposition to powdered infant milk as a substitute for mother's milk has been tempered in view of the undernourished, overworked dimensions of the lives of the vast majority of Pakistan's women in the fertility-child-producing age segments.

Voluntary work over three decades has taken this writer to villages and towns in all the four provinces where female deprivation — from the girl child to the adult woman — is vividly visible.

Every fifth pregnant woman and every child under five years survives with severe Vitamin A deficiency; 62pc of children under five years of age are anaemic. In examples of the over 12m children who are out of school, one can discern distractedness and listlessness. If in school, there is passivity and lack of energy in classroom interactions. Invariably, they are the ones who reveal poor learning indicators. They face frequent episodes of infection and illness contributing to high dropout rates.

A World Bank study has estimated that large-scale malnutrition causes a country to lose about 3pc of its GDP. Pakistan has fallen behind other nations in adjacent regions in tackling this threat. Fortunately, there are several international organisations committed to supporting countries like Pakistan to combat this condition eg Unicef, World Health Organisation, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, the US Centres for Disease Control, Nutrition International and others.

Just as imbalanced population growth has a cross-cutting effect on virtually every sector of our country's development, so too does malnutrition on a large scale and in multiple spheres — for the individual, in body, mind, and even soul; for the nation, in health, education and the economy. The July 2018 elections afford an opportunity to citizens and political parties to prioritise this subject, alongside critical issues of enhanced access to family planning services and innovative approaches to primary school education.

The National Maternal and Child Health Programme acknowledges the significance of malnutrition. Alleviation measures should be vigorously implemented. Increased awareness is needed of the lifelong damage caused by stunting

as is enhanced access to food and fortified milk at a fair cost to compensate for deficiencies in household income or in maternal health.

Subsidies through state intervention and/ or through private philanthropy to enable low-income or the poorest families to purchase supportive diets also deserve focus, as does participation by community organisations, side by side with the government, in a shared duty to effectively address this major challenge.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1407386>

## June 2018

### *FIVE MORE BABIES DIE IN THARPARKAR*

KARACHI: Five more children died in Tharparkar of malnutrition, taking the death toll to 250 in the past five months.

Sixteen children have died in this one week in the desert region that borders India. Tharparkar is one of Pakistan's poorest districts spread over nearly 20,000 square kilometres in the country's southeast. It is located at a distance of 300 kilometres from Karachi. A large population of minority Hindus lives in the area.

Mithi is the main town in the district, where the Civil Hospital is located. The hospital is in a shambles. Parents of sick children often complain of a shortage of medicines at Civil Hospital. Hospital's civil surgeon Syed Ameer Ali Shah told media persons that the facility lacks specialists and senior doctors. Only nine nurses are posted in the hospital against 19 vacancies, he said. There is only one gynaecologist for the 1.6 million population of Tharparkar district.

By Tuesday, 245 children had already died when the director-general of Sindh's health department, Dr Akhlaq Ahmed Memon, arrived in Tharparkar.—INP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/31/2-page/719790-news.html>

## July 2018

### *NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 16TH TO JULY 22ND 2018*

#### *Malnutrition, poor hygiene rampant in KIA's poor neighbourhoods*

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter July 17, 2018

KARACHI: Doctors and activists in the neighbourhoods chiefly populated by workers and their families in Korangi Industrial Area on Monday noted that the residents suffered from multiple diseases caused by chemical wastes and unclean water.

Medical camps established in the impoverished neighbourhoods like 34/3, Labour Square and other adjacent vicinities of the industrial area documented that those thickly populated and unplanned areas with streets littered with heaps of garbage, including chemical wastes, and sewage were breeding grounds for skin infections.

Besides, organisers of the camps said, the residents were badly affected due to water unfit for human consumption.

The medical camp was arranged by the Foundation for Research and Human Development (FRHD) with the support of Terre Des Hommes, an international NGO.

Country coordinator of Terre Des Hommes Salam Dharejo said mostly industrial workers resided in these areas, most of them children and women earning nominal wages, and they were unable to get proper medical treatment.

Nazra Jahan of FRHD said the camp was established as majority of those residents had no access to health facilities.

She added that the area residents were facing multiple problems such as eye and skin infections as well as hepatitis B and C.

Ms Jahan said a total of 728 patients including 153 children, 268 women and 307 men got free consultation, screening and treatment against hepatitis B and C, eye and skin infections, dental and other problems at their doorstep. She appreciated cooperation of doctors, students of medical colleges and paramedics who attended to patients.

Doctors said 114 patients were referred for screening, of whom four were found affected with hepatitis B and C. They were sent to Saylani Welfare Trust for free medical treatment and medicines, said lab technician Mohammad Arif.

Dr Lubna Nasir of the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital said the majority of patients, including children, suffered from diarrhoea, skin diseases, malaria, sore throat and chest congestion.

Dr Shoaib Shah said main problems diagnosed included anaemia in males and females, skin diseases, asthma, malnourishment in both adults and children, and arthritis. Most of these diseases were caused due to poor hygiene of people in the area.

Most people suffered from allergies due to environmental pollution. According to them, five patients were referred for cataract surgery.

Dr Saima Bashir said the key cause of all those diseases and infections was malnutrition and poor hygiene.

Published in Dawn, July 17th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1420470/malnutrition-poor-hygiene-rampant-in-kias-poor-neighbourhoods>

## **August 2018**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 27TH TO SEPTEMBER 2TH 2018***

***USAID'S REPORT ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN S PUNJAB RELEASED***

**RECORDER REPORT | AUG 29TH, 2018 | LAHORE**

USAID's Punjab Youth Workforce Development (PYWD) project presented its recently published Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Skills Gap Analysis Report -the most up-to-date account of current and future employment trends in four districts of Southern Punjab.

At an event held on Tuesday, the report synthesizes the findings of seven studies/reports produced on skills gaps in the country, highlighting their relevance in today's context, and bringing to light future job opportunities.

The report also calls attention to newly emerging sectors in Multan, Bahawalpur, Lodhran and Muzaffargarh, including hospitality and healthcare. Present at the event were representatives from the private sector, vocational training providers including Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), Punjab Vocational Training Council (PVTC), and donors supporting youth capacity-building initiatives in Pakistan.

Speaking at the event, USAID Deputy Mission Director Clay Epperson remarked, "This Skills Gap Analysis Report provides insight into the hiring trends of the market while understanding the needs of the job seekers. Through the PYWD Project, USAID is helping Pakistan maximize job creation in the productive sectors."

The event provided a platform for TVET sector public-private stakeholders, including Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Punjab Skills Development Fund, TEVTA, PVTC, and Akhuwat, to discuss the findings of the Skills Gap Analysis and propose the best ways to increase youth employment in Pakistan.

During the seminar, USAID's PYWD project and Allied Solar Private Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide self-employment opportunities for graduating students in solar panel installation.

USAID's PYWD Project is providing skills-based training programs for 10,000 youth, including 35 percent females, between the ages of 16 and 29 in the southern Punjab districts of Multan, Lodhran, Bahawalpur, and Muzaffargarh. The three-year program complements the Government of Punjab's policy to provide skill development opportunities for youth. In addition to contributing to Punjab's overall economic growth, the project also fosters socially constructive attitudes among youth for increased stability and improved livelihoods.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180829402847/>

## SINDH CM APPROVES WHEAT DISTRIBUTION TO DROUGHT-AFFECTED FAMILIES

By Our Correspondent

Published: August 29, 2018

**KARACHI:** To deal with drought-like situation in 148 dehs of seven districts of Sindh, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has ordered to distribute wheat among the affected families and provide fodder and vaccination to their cattle.

Presiding over a meeting at CM House on Tuesday, Shah discussed the findings of a committee that he formed in his last tenure to consult all major stakeholders, including civic administration and civil society, to understand the extent of the drought and the relief measures required to deal with it.

The committee was headed by Board of Revenue senior member Dr Iqbal Durrani and its other members included the livestock secretary, health secretary, agriculture secretary, public health engineering secretary, Mirpurkhas commissioner and deputy commissioners of Thar, Umerkot and Sanghar.

Briefing the meeting, Dr Durrani said that the committee held a meeting on August 21 and then visited drought affected areas on August 24 and 25. The committee also held meetings with divisional and district officers and members of civil society to understand the situation.

**CM approves one snorkel, three fire tenders for Karachi**

The committee reported that the drought had affected 167 dehs of Thar, excluding five dehs of barrage area, 25 of Umerkot, 88 of Dadu, six of Thatta, 22 of Kamber-Shahdadkot, seven of Sanghar and a large part of Chundko taluka in District Khairpur.

It was pointed out that wheat distribution was already under way on the basis of the Benazir Income Support Programme database to 175,565 families, including 87,565 of Thar, 15,442 of Umerkot, 14,000 of Sanghar, 19,791 of Dadu, 47,945 of Jamshoro and 822 of Kamber-Shahdadkot districts.

Dr Durrani also raised the issue of water shortage. The CM said that he had reports that out of 590 reverse osmosis (RO) plants, 443 were functional and 147 non-functional due to problems of electricity and other issues. He also said 237 RO plants had been converted to solar energy and the conversion of others was in progress.

**Murad Ali Shah gets second term to rule Sindh**



The meeting was informed that out of 81 water supply schemes, 43 were functional and 38 non-functional. On this, Shah directed the public health engineering department to make all the non-functional water supply schemes operational. He also directed the department and district administration to make necessary arrangements to provide drinking water to affected villages through tankers. The Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) will also help to supply water, the CM said.

The meeting was also attended by Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho, Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu, Education Minister Sardar Ali Shah, Chief Secretary Major (retd) Azam Suleman, Planning and Development Board Chairperson Mohammad Waseem, Principal Secretary to CM Sohail Rajput, Fisheries and Livestock Secretary Dr Fazlullah Pechuho, Health Secretary Dr Usman Chachar, Agriculture Secretary Shafiq Mahesar, Local Government Secretary Khalid Hyder Shah, Food Secretary Rafiq Buriro and other officers.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1790153/1-cm-approves-wheat-distribution-drought-affected-families/>

## CHILD NUTRITIONAL, MORTALITY RATES IMPROVE, SAYS REPORT

By Asma Ghani Published: August 30, 2018

Child nutrition, mortality rates improve. PHOTO: FILE

ISLAMABAD: With the government declaring an emergency over vaccination for polio and using that as a means to make inroads in its overall vaccination programme, there have been some improvements in child vaccine coverage. Elsewhere, child nutritional status has improved while mortality rates have fallen.

This was disclosed in the preliminary findings of the fourth Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2017-18, conducted by the National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) under the aegis of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations. The detailed report is expected to be compiled by December.

IYCF Strategy 2018-22 aims to fight child malnutrition

The PDHS 2017-18 documents a decrease in infant and under-five-years-of-age child mortality showing there have been some improvements in the health system.

Infant mortality was recorded at 62 deaths per 1,000 live births, down from 74% in the last survey of 2012-13. The under-five mortality rate was recorded at 74 deaths per 1,000 live births, down from 89 previously.

The neonatal mortality rate has also decreased in the past five years, from 55 to 42 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Skilled birth

The survey shows that 69% of children born in the past five years were delivered by skilled care providers. This is up from the 52 per cent recorded in the 2012-13 survey.

It further noted that 66% of all births took place in a health facility, as compared to 48% five years ago.

Urban women were far more likely to benefit from skilled delivery care than rural women with 84% of births to urban mothers assisted by a skilled provider. Moreover, 81% of babies were delivered in a health facility.

This was 63% and 59% respectively for women in rural areas.

Vaccine

Vaccine coverage rates increased over the past five years from 54% to 66% of the country.

Punjab had the highest coverage rate of 80% followed by AJK at 75%, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) at 68%, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) at 57 per cent, K-P at 55 per cent, Sindh at 49%, Balochistan at 29% and the erstwhile FATA at 30%.

Balochistan had a marked improvement over the past five years from only 16 per cent of children receiving all basic vaccinations.

Though considerable improvement was made in the indicator, PIPS Deputy Project Director Dr Aysha Sheraz said that the World Health Organisation demands that all children be vaccinated against diseases.

#### Breastfeeding

Contrary to the recommendation that children under the age of six months be exclusively breastfed, only 48% of the infants aged six months and below were exclusively breastfed while seven per cent were not breastfed at all.

This, however, was an improvement over the past five years when 38% of children under six months of age were exclusively breastfed while 45% of children were taking breast milk plus supplementary liquids and complementary foods.

#### Stunted and Wasted

The survey indicated that the nutritional status of children in Pakistan has improved over the last five years.

The percentage of stunted children declined from 45 per cent in 2012-13 to 38% in the 2017-18 survey.

A similar downward trend, from 30% to 23%, was observed for underweight children over the same period.

Children who are wasted also declined from 11% to seven%. Children who are obese remained at three% over this period.

#### Fertility

If fertility were to remain constant at current levels, a woman from Pakistan would bear an average of 3.6 children in her lifetime.

The report noted that fertility was higher amongst rural women than among urban women with rural women giving birth to about one more child on average during their reproductive years than urban women.

Malnutrition major cause of fatalities among children

However, the report noted that there has been a steady decline in fertility rates over time. From 5.4 births per woman as reported in the 1990-91 PDHS to 3.6 births per woman in the 2017-18 PDHS — a drop of about two births per woman in almost three decades. However, the decline is minimal in the recent period with 3.8 births per woman recorded in the 2012-13 survey.

Punjab has the lowest fertility rate of 3.4%, Sindh is 3.6, K-P and Balochistan are at four each, ICT at three, formerly Fata areas at 4.8, AJK at 3.7, and at G-B 4.8.

Use of contraceptives has remained stagnant over the past 5 years (34% in the 2017-18 PDHS and 35% in the 2012-13 PDHS). Seventeen per cent of currently married women has an unmet need for family planning services. Moreover, 34% of married women are currently using a contraceptive method.

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 20TH TO AUGUST 26TH 2018  
VIRAL DISEASES: MALNUTRITION CLAIMS LIVES OF FIVE CHILDREN IN THAR  
RECORDER REPORT | AUG 26TH, 2018 | THARPARKAR

At least five children died and dozen others affected due to malnutrition and epidemic diseases in Tharparkar in 24 hours. According to details, the deaths took place at Civil Hospital Mithi in last 24 hours and doctors said starving pregnant mothers arrive at the hospital and give birth to dead children.

Health and medical facilities in Thar district are far from existence as several health centers have not been inaugurated so far. Contrary to the ground realities, Sindh Health Minister Azra Fazal Pechuho, during her visit to Tharparkar, said the deaths were not occurring because of malnutrition. She also said the district had adequate medical facilities. She further stated, "Media is blowing the issues of Thar out of proportion. Children pass away here not because of starving but due to awry upbringing." Azra Fazal Pechuho said underage mothers give birth to weak kids who die on their way to hospital.

The Provincial Health Minister pledged to provide more health facilities for Tharis. She also apprised that the Sindh government was formulating 'Thar Drought Policy' to counter drought situation. <https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/08/20180826401905/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 13TH TO AUGUST 19TH 2018  
MORE THAN 1.7M CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS UNDER BISP: SECY  
RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Secretary Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Omar Hamid Khan has said that so far more than 1.7 million children across the country have been enrolled in primary schools under the programme, out of which more than 750,709 are enrolled in Sindh.

Speaking at a meeting with BBC's Women Leader, he said that societies can only be empowered through education and awareness. BISP Waseela-e-Taleem is playing an exemplary role in empowering the future of the country by educating its children.

BISP through its beneficiary committees is bringing real women empowerment in the country, he said.

Investing in women is vital for the country's development and BISP has done a remarkable job by making vulnerable women socially, politically and financially inclusive and empowered, he said.

The BISP beneficiary committee (BBC) is a cluster of 25-30 local beneficiary women that meet regularly to discuss routine issues.

The beneficiary committees are BISP's empowerment tool through which women are trained by women leaders and are socially mobilised on nutrition, health, women rights, cash withdrawal and education.

There are 50,000 BBCs across the country, which are mobilising women so that they are able to contribute towards the development of the country.

Omar said that women should realise their potential so that they could become useful members of the society.

At the end BISP Secretary heard the problems of women and directed the officials to resolve them at the earliest.

Jamal Shahid August 08, 2018

ISLAMABAD: A Senate committee on Tuesday expressed displeasure with Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) for delaying the survey of poor women.

“For three years the committee has been asking the BISP to complete its poverty survey that could have been done in two months,” said Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Problems of Less Developed Areas Senator Mohammad Usman Khan Kakar.

The committee met to discuss the performance of BISP and details of the poverty surveys and future plans.

Previous surveys were 50pc inaccurate and half of the money disbursed to poor went to undeserving people, Senator Usman Khan Kakar says

The BISP is one of the major instruments of the government to achieve targets set by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is a targeted unconditional cash transfer programme implemented by focusing on poor women.

While 90pc of BISP initiatives are funded by the government, the remaining 10pc comes from donor organisations such as Asian Development Bank, World Bank and Department for International Development.

The chairman of the committee said poverty surveys of the past were about 50pc inaccurate.

“Half of the money disbursed among the poor went to wrong and undeserving people,” Mr Kakar lamented.

Besides various other reasons, BISP cited a lack of funds as a major reason for the delay in the survey.

BISP Secretary Omer Hamid Khan said the survey would start immediately after funds were provided in September.

“BISP had to surrender its funds because the government needed money for other projects,” said Mr Khan.

He corrected the chairman by saying that the survey in the past was inaccurate by about 20pc.

He put the blame on companies hired to conduct the survey which had been replaced by new companies to ensure transparency.

“The countrywide poverty survey will now be completed in December,” the official assured the committee.

The committee was informed that BISP had now adopted a new approach – door to door survey covering 87pc population or 27 million households in the country.

The registry enables BISP to identify eligible households through an application comprising 23 questions to determine welfare status of the household.

The approach helps understand geographic locations of households, number of its members, gender age, levels of education, information about livestock and agricultural assets etc.

“International best practices suggest updating the information periodically within five to seven years to ensure validity of the data. The pilot phase of the survey covers 140 districts divided into eight clusters. Survey preparations have already been initiated in two clusters and work on others is also underway,” Mr Khan told the committee.

The committee also learnt that to date Rs590 billion had been disbursed among 5.7 million beneficiaries through computerised mechanisms.

The committee expressed disappointment over vacant posts in the BISP throughout the country. Out of 4,133 positions, only 2,077 posts were filled. The 2,088 positions are vacant due to a ban on hiring for 10 years, the BISP secretary said.

“The hiring regulations were approved last week to fill the vacant positions,” he added.

Published in Dawn, August 8th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1425599>

## September 2018

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 24TH TO SEPTEMBER 30TH 2018*

***MUCH-AWAITED FREE WHEAT DISTRIBUTION IN THAR BEGINS TODAY***

Hanif Samoon Updated September 24, 2018

MITHI: The much-awaited emergency relief operation in the drought-hit Tharparkar region begins on Monday (today), according to a statement issued by Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Asif Jamil.

The statement issued on Sunday evening said that the operation was being launched on the direction of the Sindh government. A total of 208,247 families would be provided wheat free of cost during the relief operation, it said.

The list of deserving Thari families was provided to the district administration by the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra), it said, adding that each of the enlisted families would be provided 50 bags weighing 50 kgs each.

The relief operation, according to the statement, was being launched in all seven talukas of Tharparkar district.

The district administration has advised head of the enlisted families to produce his/her CNIC for identification while approaching the officials concerned to get the wheat bags.

According to the DC, the food department has already provided gunny bags to the district administration to facilitate delivery of free wheat to the beneficiaries. The required number of gunny bags have been made available at the distribution centres in Mithi, Kaloi, Islamkot, Diplo, Nagarprkar, Dahli and Chhachhro.

The DC said in his statement that directives had been issued to the functionaries concerned for ensuring proper facilities at the centres and security to the officials and workers engaged in the process.

The officials had been told to ensure that the beneficiaries should face no problem in receiving the relief wheat.

The Thar desert region was declared ‘drought-hit’ by the Sindh government about a month ago after insufficient and erratic rains in the area caused recurrence of drought and prompted re-elected Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to announce the relief package.

Earlier on Aug 15, the DC had submitted his report on worsening drought situation in the district to the provincial relief commissioner Ghulam Qadir Junejo. However, no practical steps could be taken in the following weeks for unknown reasons.

On Sunday, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MPA from Nagarparkar Qasim Siraj Soomro told local reporters that the chief minister had asked the district administration at Mithi to kick off the free wheat distribution from Monday.

Mr Soomro acknowledged that during his recent visits to various areas of his constituency, he had seen drought-hit families migrating to barrage areas for their survival.

Infants' death toll continues to rise Water-borne diseases and malnutrition claimed lives of six infants in the drought-hit Thar over the past two days leading the toll of such deaths this year to 463, according to unofficial sources.

All the six infants died at the Mithi Civil Hospital where they were brought for treatment from different villages of the district.

Parents of the infants, as well as many other children receiving treatment at the hospital, complained of a lack of proper healthcare facilities and unavailability of medicines in adequate quantity as well as indifferent attitude of doctors and paramedics.

Speaking to local reporters, they said free ambulance service, meant for poor families, was also not available for those patients who were referred to any major hospital in Hyderabad or Karachi.

Regarding water-borne diseases hitting their villages off and on, they said people of most villages had to consume subsoil water as no proper water supply system existed there.

Published in Dawn, September 24th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1434629/much-awaited-free-wheat-distribution-in-thar-begins-today>

## GEARING UP FOR CHICKEN EXPORTS

Ahmad Fraz Khan September 24, 2018

The poultry industry has been expanding at eight to 10 per cent a year. This growth has also led to increased domestic consumption of broiler meat, which is expected to reach 26 kilograms per person by 2020 from 16kg in 1993.

In 2016-17, total broiler population was 962 million birds, which produced 1.15 billion tonnes of broiler meat, or 28pc of total meat in the country. The industry's potential for exports cannot be exaggerated.

In the last budget, the federal government slashed sales tax from 17pc to 7pc on seven different types of machinery that the industry uses. It also withdrew 5pc regulatory duty on the import of grandparent and parent stocks. It also reduced the customs duty from 11pc to 3pc. The Punjab government promulgated Poultry Production Act 2016 and followed it up with Poultry Production Rules 2017.

However, the industry is still facing some problems, which hobble its growth and potential as a global player. The cost of production tops the list of these problems. Feed production is the biggest expense that largely depends on a smooth and reasonably priced supply of maize and pulses. Media reports suggest that the consumption of pulses in Pakistan has dropped from 15kg to 7kg per person in the country because of its unavailability and the pricing factor. This only increases the cost of production for the poultry industry.

As for the tax regime, the report says that turnover tax was increased in 2011 from 0.5pc to 1pc for all industries. The poultry industry fought its case and got it reduced to 0.5pc. Subsequently, turnover tax for all industries was reduced by half in June 2012. This should have brought it down to 0.25pc for the poultry industry, but that didn't happen.

Withholding tax on the poultry industry was exempted under Income Tax Ordinance 1979. The relevant exemption in the ordinance said: "Persons receiving payments from a company exclusively for the supply of agriculture produce (including fresh milk, live chicken birds and eggs) by any person engaged in poultry farming and by an industrial undertaking engaged in poultry processing, which has not been subjected to any process other than that which is ordinarily performed to render such produce to be taken to market."

Sales tax at the rate of 16pc on electricity bills is being charged under Section 3(1) of Sales Tax Act 1990.

Withholding tax is being charged at 10pc under Section 235(4)(A) of Income Tax Ordinance 2001. Poultry and its products are exempted from sale tax as per the sixth schedule of Sale Tax Act 1990. Both of these taxes increase the cost of production.

In addition to tax problems, administrative issues also play an important role in this regard. The poultry industry deals with 33 different departments, which create legal, tax, procedural and administrative hurdles for poultry production.

As for export promotion, the report says free trade agreements (FTAs) are being negotiated with many countries, but local stakeholders are not part of these talks. Subsidies on the export of processed chicken are a norm globally. For example, the European Union gives a subsidy of 0.325 euro cents per kilogram of frozen chicken. But there is no such provision in Pakistan.

Bilateral trade agreements with countries having different regulations require that the domestic regime be readjusted. For example, Malaysia and China allow the stunning of animals before slaughter for halal meat, but it is not allowed in Pakistan. Non-stunning slaughter increases the cost by 8.5pc.

The report suggests measures for reducing the cost of production by adjusting the tax regime and local cropping patterns besides reducing administrative hassle. It also calls for making necessary changes in local laws to bring efficiency in the domestic market.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, September 24th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1434620/gearing-up-for-chicken-exports>

THARIS COMPLAIN OF HUMILIATING ATTITUDE AS FREE WHEAT DISTRIBUTION GETS UNDER WAY  
Hanif Samoon September 25, 2018

MITHI: Drought-stricken Tharis, who were made to walk several miles on foot under scorching sun and in some cases travel hundreds of miles to reach the centres for distribution of wheat on Monday complained of having to put up with humiliating and indifferent attitude of the government staff for a meagre 50kg bag of wheat.

The people at the seven centres in Mithi, Chhachhro, Nagarparkar, Islamkot, Khensar, Kaloi and Diplo where the government started the process of distributing wheat to over 2.08 million Tharis after much dilly-dallying said that they had to travel hundreds of miles to get the meagre wheat and that too after having to suffer humiliation.

They complained of arrogant and indifferent attitude of the functionaries concerned at the centres and said that in past the Sindh government used to hand over wheat to over 287,000 families at their doorsteps but this time the affected families were made to travel several miles to reach the taluka headquarters for the relief.

They said that over 40 per cent families of 1.6 million people had been deprived of relief wheat in the drought-stricken desert region.

Rights activists and members of civil society termed the wheat distribution according to Nadra record a joke with the poor drought-hit people and said the gravest issues of the district were safe drinking water, fodder for their livestock and quality healthcare facilities.

Pakistan Peoples Party Thar chapter information secretary Nandlal Malhi said in a statement issued to local media that the latest wheat distribution was a cruel joke with drought-stricken people.

PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari had directed high-ups of the Sindh government to immediately provide relief to Tharis at their doorsteps but instead they were being subjected to humiliation for a meagre quantity of wheat, he said.

He asked revenue officials to take the wheat bags to villages and hand them over to Tharis at their doorsteps to spare the time and money they had to spend on transportation of the grain from the towns to their villages.

He demanded revenue and food department officials to coordinate with PPP leaders as well as members of local government and bring all stakeholders on board to run the relief operation in a smooth and hassle-free manner.

Dr Shaikh Tanweer Ahmed, chief of an NGO working in Thar on health and nutrition issues, expressed serious concerns over 'mishandling' of relief operation and pointed out that children and pregnant women needed much more than only bags of wheat.

He urged national and international organisations to step forward and help Tharis in their difficult time caused by severe drought.

Published in Dawn, September 25th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1434742/tharis-complain-of-humiliating-attitude-as-free-wheat-distribution-gets-under-way>

## BALUCHISTAN CM VOWS TO END POVERTY

Bahram Baloch September 29, 2018

GWADAR: Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani said on Friday that his government was committed to tapping the vast natural resources of the province and using them for poverty alleviation in the province.

Speaking at an exhibition of mineral resources titled 'Marble and Mineral Expo 2018' in Gwadar, the chief minister said that through international investment in projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Balochistan's natural resources could be explored.

He said the province's resources would be used for betterment its people.

Mr Alyani said after becoming fully functional the port in Gwadar would turn this city into a hub of international trade and boost trade activities in the country.

The chief minister said his government was giving due importance to Gwadar and trying to provide all basic and modern facilities to it. The government was taking keen interest in developing Gwadar as a modern mega city, he added.

He said the local people of Gwadar had the first right to receive benefits of CPEC projects, adding that the provincial government would ensure that the people of the area were given top priority in employment opportunities created by the CPEC.



He urged the people of the area not to pay any heed to propaganda being made by some elements against development projects in the province.

The chief minister sought China's help for developing the IT sector and other technical fields in Gwadar, saying that the provincial government would provide a conducive environment to foreign companies for the purpose.

Speaking on the occasion, Balochistan Economic Forum (BEF) chairman Shoukat Populzai said that Balochistan had vast opportunities for investment and the BEF would continue highlighting business aspects of the province.

Gwadar Port chairman Mir Dostain Jamaldini, China Overseas Port and Hold Company's Mr Chahoo, President of Gwadar Chamber of Commerce Naveed Kalmati and other officials also spoke on the occasion.

Published in Dawn, September 29th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1435689/balochistan-cm-vows-to-end-poverty>

## SEVEN MORE INFANTS DIE IN THAR

A Correspondent September 29, 2018

MITHI: Seven more infants died from complications caused by malnutrition and viral infections at the Mithi Civil Hospital over the past two days, raising the death toll to 472 this year alone.

People carrying their sick children told local reporters that the hospital was facing shortage of medicines and other facilities. They alleged that their ailing children were not being provided quality healthcare facilities. "We are forced to drink contaminated water of wells, which is the main cause behind the deaths of infants," they added.

They demanded provision of water at their villages for people and their livestock.

In the meanwhile, people continued their protest against what they termed unfair distribution of wheat among only 280,000 people after the Sindh government declared Thar drought-hit due to insufficient rains in the desert region.

Leading the protest against the 'relief operation', Haji Qamaruddin Rahimoon, chairman of the Chhachhro town committee, told this reporter that Tharis needed basic facilities, water and medicines, in large quantity instead of limited number of wheat bags.

Not only human beings in Thar, but also their livestock were in dire need of attention. Holding the elected representatives of Thar responsible for the situation, he said they failed to raise the issues in parliament and mitigate the sufferings of the area people.

Published in Dawn, September 29th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1435586/seven-more-infants-die-in-thar>

## NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 17TH TO SEPTEMBER 23TH 2018

### MALNUTRITION REALITY

Editorial September 17, 2018

A NEW annual UN report, State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, warns that global hunger is rising to alarming levels last witnessed a decade ago. The report's authors state that, among other key drivers, climate extremes contributed to rising hunger afflicting 821m people last year — the third annual rise since 2015. Worse still, malnutrition has left over 151m children under the age of five stunted, with Asia accounting for 55pc of the total. That

climate shocks harm agricultural production, leaving people without enough to eat, is an inescapable reality in Pakistan. With more than 60pc of the population food-insecure, we are not just faced with emergency levels of hunger but also chronic hunger. Nearly 80pc of babies are deprived of adequate nutrition because of acute poverty. Resultantly, 44pc of all children are stunted. These figures tell a story of years of utter disregard for the less privileged. Moreover, it is of serious concern when a food-surplus country is a major producer of wheat and rice but its most vulnerable communities cannot afford to eat. Although Prime Minister Imran Khan's commitment to ending hunger demonstrates that his government has prioritised fighting malnutrition, one has reason to be sceptical when strategies to alleviate poverty and hunger have hardly ever made it off the table in the past. Combating malnutrition requires reassessing whether people's nutritional needs are being met. Policies must focus on those most vulnerable to the harmful consequences of poor food access — especially in Sindh where cyclical drought and floods cause death from severe hunger; and in districts of Balochistan and Fata where food insecurity is exacerbated by conflict and economic instability. Food fortification strategies and removing gender inequity are equally urgent measures.

While scaling up food interventions can break the cycle of malnourishment, strengthening the resilience of food systems in response to changing weather patterns is another challenge. Because undernourishment tends to be greater in regions highly exposed to climate extremes, a sustainable shift must be made towards agricultural methods that can provide safe and high-quality food. The government must realise that combating the many factors underlying acute malnutrition, including inadequate access to nutrient-rich foods, disease prevalence, poor healthcare, unsafe water and suboptimal breastfeeding practices, calls for political will, provincial resources and a dedicated task force committed to decreasing the number of children at risk of hunger-related death.

Published in Dawn, September 17th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1433442/malnutrition-reality>

#### TO FIGHT POVERTY, WORLD SHOULD INVEST IN AFRICA'S YOUTH: BILL GATES RECORDER REPORT SEP 19TH, 2018 UNITED NATIONS

The world should help Africa invest in its people as the continent confronts a demographic boom, said billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates, whose foundation released its annual report on Tuesday.

Gates put forward a "simple idea" that investing in the health and education of Africa's younger generation would help tackle poverty.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation released its annual "Goalkeepers" report measuring progress towards achieving UN poverty-reducing goals in 2030, based on an assessment of 18 indicators.

While poverty is receding globally, the demographic boom could stall that progress and it could even rise, the report warns.

"If those investments are made in the right way," said the report, young Africans would contribute to the economy and the population growth would likely diminish, as has been the case in other countries. A projection of poverty rates in the report showed that by 2050, more than 40 percent of extremely poor people in the world will live in just two countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria.

"The particular challenge of the population growth in Africa leads to a simple idea that the world should help Africa invest in its human capital, and that means both the health and the education of this young generation coming up in Africa," Gates told journalists.

In its annual assessment, the foundation cited progress from Brazil on nutrition, Indonesia for family planning and Vietnam for the quality of education. Bill and Melinda Gates will co-host an event in New York next week, on the sidelines of the gathering of world leaders at the United Nations, to highlight their campaign for investing in youth.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/09/20180919409031/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 10TH TO SEPTEMBER 16TH 2018

NUMBER OF HUNGRY PEOPLE HAS RISEN TO 820M, SAYS UN REPORT

Masood Haider Updated September 12, 2018

NEW YORK: There is new evidence signalling that the number of hungry people in the world is growing and rose around 820 million in 2017, according to the United Nation's "State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018 report" released on Tuesday.

The report also highlighted that there was limited progress in addressing the multiple forms of malnutrition, ranging from child stunting to adult obesity, putting the health of hundreds of millions of people at risk.

With hunger on the rise over the past three years, returning to levels from a decade ago, the report warned that more must be done and urgently if UN'S Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of hunger eradication is to be achieved by 2030.

The UN said the situation is worsening in South America and most regions of Africa, while the decreasing trend in undernourishment that characterised Asia seems to be slowing down significantly.

The annual UN report found that climate variability affecting rainfall patterns and agricultural seasons, and climate extremes such as droughts and floods are among the key drivers behind the rise in hunger, together with conflict and economic slowdowns.

"The alarming signs of increasing food insecurity and high levels of different forms of malnutrition are a clear warning that there is considerable work to be done to make sure we 'leave no one behind' on the road towards achieving the SDG goals on food security and improved nutrition," the heads of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) warned in their joint foreword to the report.

"If we are to achieve a world without hunger and malnutrition in all its forms by 2030, it is imperative that we accelerate and scale up actions to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of food systems and people's livelihoods in response to climate variability and extremes," the leaders said.

Analysis in the report shows that the prevalence and number of undernourished people tend to be higher in countries highly exposed to climate extremes.

Undernourishment is higher again when exposure to climate extremes is compounded by a high proportion of the population depending on agricultural systems that are highly sensitive to rainfall and temperature variability.

Temperature anomalies over agricultural cropping areas continued to be higher than the long-term mean throughout 2011–2016, leading to more frequent spells of extreme heat in the last five years.

The nature of rainfall seasons is also changing, such as the late or early start of rainy seasons and the unequal distribution of rainfall within a season.

The harm to agricultural production contributes to shortfalls in food availability, with knock-on effects causing food price hikes and income losses that reduce people's access to food, the report said.

Published in Dawn, September 12th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1432401/number-of-hungry-people-has-risen-to-820m-says-un-report>

## NEARLY 80PC OF BABIES DO NOT GET BALANCED DIET: REPORT

Ikram Junaidi Updated September 14, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The nutrition wing of the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS) revealed in a recent report that nearly 80pc of Pakistani children between the ages of six and 23 months do not get a balanced diet, leading to stunted growth.

More than half of all infants do not receive solid, semi-solid or soft food during the recommended period, while just 22pc of children up to the age of two receive a diet that meets the minimum standards of dietary diversity – of four or more food groups out of seven.

Nutrition Wing head Dr Baseer Khan Achakzai told Dawn the last national nutrition survey had been held in 2011, and a new one was needed so future policy may be devised in light of its findings.

“The survey, which has been held across the country and took almost six months, shows that children do not get sufficient proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and other important parts of a diet,” he said.

“Affordability is the main problem in accessing a nutritious diet, as fruits, eggs and meat are expensive. Vitamin B12, vitamin A, calcium and iron are hardly available in local foods,” he said.

“We looked at the cost of diets across the country and it was revealed that the cost of a nutritious diet ranges between Rs104,000 to Rs171,300 annually per household.”

Current consumption patterns are unlikely to change unless household income increases, Dr Achakzai said, as the availability of major food items in the market is not an issue.

He added that more than 40pc of Pakistani children are stunted.

“We have suggested four major steps to address the issue. Poor families should be given vitamins on the community level, the breastfeeding ordinance needs to be implemented and it should be mentioned on the formula that it is not an alternative to mother’s milk.

“Food fortification should be done through flour and oil by including vitamins A and D and folic acid. Bio-diversification is also required, as some varieties of wheat have zinc and folic acid. Food baskets should be provided to the poor through the Benazir Income Support Programme,” he said.

A ministry official who asked not to be named said it has been suggested to the Prime Minister’s Office that Rs400 million have to be spent on a district with a population of one million every year.

“The percentage of stunted children can be reduced by 15 to 20pc if Rs400m is spent on a population of 1m continuously for four years,” he said.

According to the National Complementary Feeding Assessment report, the survey was conducted in 17 livelihood zones in 12 districts across four provinces. It was commissioned by Unicef Pakistan with funding from the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development.

The study found that the recommended intakes of energy, protein, fat, all nine vitamins and four minerals can be met using foods available in the local market unless restricted by economic constraints and cultural practices.

Very poor and poor households cannot afford a nutritious diet in almost all livelihood zones given their current level of income.

The main recommendations were that dietary modification is needed to improve the quality, composition and affordability of a nutritious diet. Cheap nutritious options should be promoted, as should self-production of some crops and vegetables and cow, buffalo and goat milk to improve the quality, composition and affordability of a nutritious diet.

Published in Dawn, September 14th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1432765>

## BISP TO LAUNCH PILOT FOOD PROGRAMME IN G-B

By Our Correspondent

Published: September 13, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is all set to launch a pilot food programme in three districts of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) with technical assistance from World Food Programme (WFP).

The pilot food programme would address the crucial issue of stunted growth of children in the country as per the goal of the incumbent federal government and World Health Organisation.

BISP Additional Director General Conditional Cash Transfers Naveed Akbar told The Express Tribune that food programme with the technical assistance from WFP to address malnutrition is already going on in a few districts of Sindh for at least one year while results are awaited.

He said that a total of 12,000 pregnant/lactating mothers and 15,000 children between the age of six to 23 months would be targeted in the three districts of G-B. He added that the targeted population will be given essential nutritional supplements to address malnutrition.

“If the results of the pilot programme in GB will be as desired then the food programme will roll out across the country,” he said adding that such programmes at present are need of the hour to address the issue of malnutrition in the country.

Pakistan had a stunted growth rate of 44 per cent in children while 9.6 million children experienced chronic nutrition deprivation in 2016. The new government had also taken notice of the urgency of the matter and committed to utilise all resources to reduce the rate of stunted growth in children.

Earlier, Secretary BISP Omer Hamid Khan was informed that 144,199 children have been enrolled under the Waseela-e-Taleem programme from January to September 2018 in Punjab region.

Secretary BISP was on an official tour of regional office Punjab, where he reviewed the operational matters of the organisation and urged the officials to deal with the complaints of beneficiaries in a better manner.

He also met the women leaders of BISP’s Waseela-e-Taleem programme and assured them of resolution of their issues. He also said that BISP would soon launch a support fund for disabled children and unmarried girls of BISP beneficiaries.

He added that BISP would also launch small loans and skill development initiatives for BISP beneficiaries, which will help the beneficiaries to come out of poverty towards economic empowerment.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1802573/1-bisp-launch-pilot-food-programme-g-b/>

## BILAWAL ASKS MURAD FOR STEPS TO CONTROL DEATHS IN THAR

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter September 15, 2018

KARACHI: While media reports about unabated deaths of infants due to malnutrition and a lack of proper healthcare facilities in Tharparkar continued to cause an alarm across the country over the past few years, chairman of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari took up the issue with Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday and directed him to do the needful in this regard.

He met Mr Shah at Bilawal House to discuss ways and means to contain an acute shortage of water and address certain other related issues that had created a crisis-like situation in recent weeks. Better governance in the province, mainly in the Thar region, also came under discussion.

“Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has asked the Sindh government to stay alert to situation popping up in Thar and other areas of the province due to meagre monsoon rains,” said a statement issued after the meeting.

The situation “can be controlled and improved through better strategy and governance in the areas targeted by drought spell”, it said.

The PPP chairman took up the issue after concerned was shown by several key leaders of rival political parties over the situation. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, a couple of days back questioned performance of PPP, which is ruling over the province for a third consecutive term.

“I am deeply concerned by the state of affairs in Tharparkar. Our people are dying of draught and lack of clean drinking water while innocent kids are dying of inadequate health facilities,” FM Qureshi had tweeted. “I urge the PPP-led Sindh Government to urgently provide necessary facilities as per their pre-election promises.”

Earlier this week, Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP) chief Syed Mustafa Kamal had urged Prime Minister Imran Khan to personally look into the growing number of deaths of infants and expecting mothers in the desert region.

Apart from the Thar issue, the PPP chairman also discussed overall performance of the Sindh government so far.

Published in Dawn, September 15th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1433002/bilawal-asks-murad-for-steps-to-control-deaths-in-thar>

## GOVT TO LAUNCH RELIEF OPERATION IN THAR SOON

A Correspondent September 15, 2018

MITHI: The Sindh government is gearing up for launching a massive relief operation in all parts of drought-hit Thar within next few days, according to Pakistan Peoples Party MPA Qasim Siraj Soomro.

Mr Soomro told media persons in Nagarparkar on Friday that erratic rains in most parts of the desert region had led to severe drought conditions, which forced hundreds of families to migrate to barrage areas in search of livelihood and fodder for their livestock.

“We have plans to launch sustainable programmes to provide relief and rid the arid region of ravages caused by recurring droughts,” he said, adding it was their duty to mitigate peoples’ misery. He warned health officials to discharge their duties honestly and provide relief to ailing Tharis.

Published in Dawn, September 15th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1432972/govt-to-launch-relief-operation-in-thar-soon>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 3TH TO SEPTEMBER 9TH 2018  
CABINET'S NOD AWAITED FOR EXPANDING NUTRITION PROJECT

By APP Published: September 3, 2018

Last two years' statistics show that some 75% children under five were malnourished, Jhal Magsi DHO says. PHOTO: AFP

ISLAMABAD: The Balochistan Health Department, after going through necessary modalities, is waiting for the provincial cabinet's nod to expand the Nutrition Project for Mothers and Children (NPMC) that marked a significant achievement in some seven districts of the province in its first phase.

Health Secretary Saleh Muhammad Nasar said, "The department has completed its working to expand the successful project to the remaining 24 districts to curtail the high number of mothers and infants mortality rate for which the authorities concerned have faced criticism for poor governance."

Talking to APP, he said, under the NPMC programme, the assessment of nutritional status of children below five and pregnant women would be done in targeted districts.

"Provision of Multiple Micro-nutrient Sachets (MMS) is continuing to address the micro-nutrient deficiency of all children aged six to 23 months," said the health secretary. "Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) is being provided to severely malnourished mothers and children."

The secretary said that severely malnourished children with complications were being referred to Stabilisation Centres established at District Headquarters Hospital for treatment and follow-up.

Nasar further told that the continuation of the programme was due to its effective orientation that helped curtail mortality rate in seven districts – Dera Bugti, Khulo, Panjgur, Qilla Saifullah, Lasbela, Noshki and Kharan.

"The children under five suffering from diarrhoea are also being provided ORS and zinc," he said, adding that counseling of pregnant and lactating women on nutrition, health and hygiene was being done by Lady Health Workers in Mother Support Groups established at the community level.

As a result of careful measures taken by the health department for the NPMC programme, he said, the malnutrition ratio of children under five had reduced by 30 per cent in the last two years.

For women of the reproductive age group, some 10% reduction in anemia has also been achieved.

Sharing the outcome of the project, Nasar informed that the nutritional status of male and female children less than five years of age and that of women for the first time recorded overall growth in last 15 years. The provincial government has been struggling with the growth rate to improve with its limited financial and technical resources.

He said goal of the Infant Young Child Feeding (IYCF) strategy was to further improve the nutritional status, growth and development, survival of the infants and young children through optimal practices.

He regretted that unfortunately some 44 per cent of the province's children were found stunted, too short for their age and more than half of all households were found either hungry or faced threat of hunger.

Jhal Magsi District Health Officer Rukhsana proposed a comprehensive nutrition policy, saying, "Only chocolate won't work to heal the wounds."

She warned that malnutrition also had a vicious, multi-generational impact since malnourished mothers were more likely to have underweight children and “newborn babies may have more health complexities in coming life”. She said Jhal Magsi was most affected from child mortality and malnutrition in the province and according to last two years’ statistics, some 75 per cent children under five were malnourished. The entire population was at the risk of poverty in this district, she added.

She also stressed the need for creating more awareness among parents regarding a balanced food intake that contained requisite protein, vitamins and minerals.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1793736/1-cabinets-nod-awaited-expanding-nutrition-project/>

#### BISP INKS MOU WITH TRANSPARENT HANDS TRUST

ISLAMABAD: BISP inked MoU with Transparent Hands Trust (TH) to work in joint collaboration for the underprivileged people in the society, with the special focus on health care services. The MoU was signed by DG Complementary Initiatives from BISP and Vice Chairman TH in the presence of Secretary BISP Omar Hamid Khan.

“We are a non-profit organization in the health sector and through our innovative interventions and policy reforms contribute to improve access to quality treatment of underprivileged”, briefed by Kashif Moin, Vice Chairperson Transparent Hands Trust (TH) as he called Secretary BISP on MoU signing ceremony between the two organizations.

The DG Complementary Initiatives, BISP explained the possible mutual working relationship scenarios with the assurance to extend institutional support to TH. While discussing the present operation of TH the Vice Chairman said we are treating around 9000 patients and conducted 300 surgeries in collaboration with 12 hospitals including Pediatrics, Urology, Orthopedics, Gynecology, Nero surgery, Oncology and General surgery. Our goal is to save lives of the underprivileged class of the country.

Welcoming the partnerships, the Secretary added, that this collaboration would involve female BISP beneficiaries to get free medical check-up facility in the operational districts of TH which includes Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Chakwal, Okara, Kasur and Lahore.

Moreover, 05 training activities will be performed to enable 50 BISP beneficiaries to become healthcare ambassadors. Secretary further added that BISP will also provide data of qualified intermediates BISP beneficiaries in the selected districts to TH as per data sharing protocol of BISP.—PR

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/09/04/8-page/736934-news.html>

#### ADB ALLOCATES \$300M TO BISP FOR THREE YEARS

By Sehrish Wasif

Published: September 4, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday allocated \$300 million specifically for Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) under its country operations business plan for Pakistan for the next three years from 2019-2021, says a handout issued by BISP.

ADB Director General Werner Liepach for Central and West Asia Department (CWRD) and BISP secretary had a high level meeting here at BISP headquarters and was attended by the country representatives of ADB and Director Generals from the BISP.



Liepach said that ADB is committed to continuing its support to the deprived segments of society in Pakistan through the platform of BISP.

He said that this funding would be used for up-scaling of the ongoing programs and launching of new BISP initiatives, especially targeted towards poverty alleviation and gender empowerment.

ADB is exclusively focusing on the BISP graduation model and has assured full financial support for its implementation, he added.

The director general further said the pilot phase of ADB financed program for graduating of BISP beneficiaries out of the poverty has already been initiated and based on its success, a full scaled project will be launched for the BISP beneficiaries across the country.

Liepach also assured that the portfolio review of the ADB financed projects of BISP would be accelerated to enable preparation for the upcoming projects.

He said the “Newly-elected government of Pakistan has much more emphasis on social sector initiatives and is more inclined towards executing social sector initiatives through indigenous funding or soft grant options”.

ADB appreciates this approach and is strongly committed for future mutual cooperation keeping in view the GOP priorities by offering concessional funding, Liepach added.

BISP Secretary Omar Hamid Khan welcomed the support and said that ADB has a pivotal role in supporting women empowerment and poverty reduction in the country.

He added that BISP engagement history with ADB reflects harmony in mutual understanding of both the organisations.

Reciprocating Liepach’s commitment for support, the secretary assured full cooperation in timely and efficient execution of all future programs and initiatives.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1794640/1-adb-allocates-300m-bisp-three-years/>

#### **MALNUTRITION CLAIMS FIVE MORE LIVES IN THARPARKAR**

**THARPARKAR:** Five more minors who were under treatment for malnutrition at the Civil Hospital in Tharparkar passed away on Tuesday.

According to the Tharparkar Department of Health, the minors were aged between six days and a year. The latest fatalities have taken the death toll in Tharparkar to 14 for this month. In August, a total of 40 minors had succumbed to malnutrition in the area.

In 2018, the local health department reported 428 minors dead due to malnutrition and other diseases in the area.

According to the health department, every year 1,500 children die due to malnutrition, infections and lack of proper medical facilities in the remote region.

A report released by the United Nation’s Children Fund in April stated that Pakistan is among countries with the highest infant mortality rates, with 22 infants dying before turning one month old. Among these countries, eight are in Africa and two in Asia, including Afghanistan which is ranked third.

“Pakistan is the riskiest place to be born as measured by its newborn mortality rate,” the report stated. “A baby born in Pakistan is almost 50 times more likely to die during his or her first month than a baby born in Japan, Iceland and Singapore.”—INP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/09/05/3-page/737078-news.html>

## October 2018

### *NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 22TH TO OCTOBER 28TH 2018*

#### **THAR DEATHS**

Editorial Updated October 22, 2018

ONCE again, the beleaguered citizens of Thar are in the headlines.

On Friday, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah was briefed about the abysmal healthcare situation in the region, with the information being provided that over 500 children have died during the current year in the desert area — this is the highest figure for the past four years. According to the provincial health secretary, 450 children lost their lives in 2017, while 479 died in 2016 and 398 in 2015.

The reasons for the deaths vary, according to the authorities: pre-term and low birth weight, birth asphyxia, pneumonia, respiratory distress syndrome, acute malnutrition with complications, and diarrhoea.

The chief minister’s response was that “we have to take a holistic approach to resolve the issue for good”.

One outcome of the briefing was that Mr Shah directed public-sector medical universities to set up health camps in the region, and make greater efforts to ensure the implementation of family planning measures, a nutrition programme, and the provision of clean drinking water amongst other mitigation moves.

It is an unfortunate fact that the country — and more importantly, its administration — tends to not remember its most vulnerable citizens in their time of need. For several years now, the Thar region of Sindh has been in the news because of the number of child deaths and maternal mortality rates.

Part of this tragedy has been attributed to the fact that the area has been in a state of drought, but more relevant is the reality that the state has abdicated its responsibilities towards those who have no voice and hardly any agency in lobbying for improved access to their rights.

Thar is a grossly underserved part of the country, and drought or not, the state needs to step in to do what is required of it to save lives and futures.

This means providing incentives for healthcare and education, and investing in other infrastructure, with the introduction of innovative interventions where required.

Surely, that is not too much to ask.

Published in Dawn, October 22nd, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1440563/thar-deaths>

#### **PERFORMANCE OF NGOS WORKING ON NUTRITION IN THAR UNSATISFACTORY, SAYS SINDH CS**

Hanif Samoon Updated October 25, 2018

MITHI: Sindh Chief Secretary Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah has expressed frustration over performance of the many non-governmental organisations purportedly working on nutrition in Thar and said their work has been completely “unsatisfactory” for the past many years.

The only solution to recurring droughts and subsequent deaths of children and mass migration of Tharis was framing of long-term policies and implementing them in letter and spirit, he said during a visit to Mithi Civil Hospital here on Wednesday.

He said the Sindh government had planned a mega scheme for tackling malnutrition and its complications commonly found in the desert region since it was one of the major problems confronting Thar.

Mr Shah, who arrived in Thar on a two-day visit along with senior officials of different departments, expressed his grief over unabated deaths of children in Thar and said there was still much to be done to save lives of infants and pregnant women.

He ordered health officials to make all-out efforts to provide quality healthcare to patients and free ambulance service to the serious ones to help shift them to teaching hospitals in Karachi and Hyderabad. “I will not tolerate refusal [of] free service to patients,” he warned.

He said that he would take up the issue of construction of a modern hospital for children in Mithi with the chief minister and asked members of civil society to discourage the practice of underage marriages, which was also one of the reasons behind maternal and infant deaths.

He said the Sindh government had directed heads of medical universities to send doctors to Thar and a number of teams were already working in Thar to provide best healthcare facilities to people.

He announced distributing fodder among Tharis for their starving livestock and said the process of distribution would start within next few days. “Tharis leave their homes only after they find no fodder and water for their cattle and we are ensuring that water is supplied to all Thar areas with all available means including canal water and reverse osmosis plants,” he said.

Mr Shah said that payment to the private firm, which ran the RO plants, would be made within next few days. It was very painful to see Thari women walking several miles on foot in search of water, he said, adding that he would summon irrigation officials and order them to release water into the only channel of the desert region, the Rann Minor.

He took notice of forced revenue collection from weekly cattle markets in Thar towns and directed the deputy commissioner to immediately stop the practice and keep it suspended as long as drought conditions prevailed in Thar.

Published in Dawn, October 25th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1441100/performance-of-ngos-working-on-nutrition-in-thar-unsatisfactory-says-sindh-cs>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 15TH TO OCTOBER 21TH 2018

PM LOOKS UP TO CHINESE MODEL IN FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY, CORRUPTION

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Updated October 16, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has expressed the desire to learn from China how to fight the monsters of poverty, rampant corruption and downfall of agriculture sector.

“Pakistan would like to learn from Chinese experience in poverty alleviation, fighting corruption and agriculture development through sharing expertise, technology and best practices in the sector,” he said on Monday in a meeting with members of a visiting delegation of the Communist Party of China (CPC) headed by Minister of International Development of China Song Tao at the Prime Minister’s Office.

Earlier, the prime minister received the delegation and hoped that its visit would further cement bilateral relations between the two countries.

PM Khan said the China International Import Expo, being held next month, would provide an opportunity to two sides to look into export possibilities from Pakistan to China.

President Xi Jinping’s terming of this friendship as that of “iron brothers” reflects an undeniable reality.

Mr Khan said President Xi was a great statesman for whom there was much admiration by the people of Pakistan.

Appreciating the growing relations between PTI and CPC, the PM emphasised on further enhancing these ties through exchange of delegations and sharing of ideas. On his upcoming visit to China, Mr Khan said he looked forward to his meetings with the Chinese leadership.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Song Tao underscored the importance attached by the leadership and people of China to relations with Pakistan. He assured China’s support to Pakistan at all regional international fora, as well as in addressing the agenda of poverty alleviation, fighting corruption and agricultural development.

Chinese minister said exchanges between political parties would help in sharing ideas to achieve common and shared development. He termed China Pakistan Economic Corridor as a flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative, which would make significant contributions towards building a “new” Pakistan.

Published in Dawn, October 16th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1439304/pm-looks-up-to-chinese-model-in-fight-against-poverty-corruption>

## CABINET APPROVES RS72.5BN POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR ENTIRE PROVINCE

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter October 17, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh government approved on Tuesday the poverty reduction strategy to start rural and urban poverty reduction programme all over the province. Under the programme, Rs72.5 billion will be invested in education, health, water, sanitation and development of internal village roads during the next five years.

This decision was taken by the cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah at the New Sindh Secretariat here on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by all the provincial ministers, advisers and special assistants.

The strategy was prepared by the planning and development department with EU assistance after a two-year survey and study under which poverty would be reduced by upgrading villages, giving them internal roads, water supply and drainage schemes, health facilities, vocational training and a holistic approach to improving quality of education.

The chief minister said this would be in addition to the already launched poverty reduction programmes and initiatives.

Newly inducted ministers given portfolios

Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho informed the cabinet that with the assistance of the German Development Bank four modern regional blood centres (RBCs) had been constructed in Sukkur, Jamshoro, Shaheed Benazirabad and Karachi. She said that as the health department had no prior experience of managing the sophisticated blood centres, the centres might be contracted out to an experienced private sector organisation under the PPP mode. The cabinet after a formal representation, approved contracting out the RBC Jamshoro to the Indus Hospital, RBC Sukkur to the Sukkur Blood and Drug Donating Society, RBC Shaheed Benazirabad to the Fatimid Foundation and RBC Karachi to the Ziauddin Hospital.

The cabinet also approved the action plan prepared in the light of Supreme Court judgement by the public health engineering department (PHED) for transferring all the functions relating to water, sewerage schemes, including installation, operation and management of RO plants to the department, including all the relevant staff of local government. Under the plan 1,572 schemes would be operated and the salaries of the staff would come to Rs642 million. The cabinet also approved Rs500m for transaction and placed it at the disposal of the PHED secretary.

Additional Chief Secretary Sohail Akbar Shah said that productive forests include irrigated plantation spread over 0.800 million acres. Similarly, protective forests, which include mangroves and rangelands, cover 2.5 million acres. In this way our forests spread over 3.3m acres, which constitute eight per cent of the total land area of Sindh.

The chief minister told the cabinet that the provincial government had received an email from Guinness World Records for establishing a record of planting mangroves.

The chief minister taking serious note of using government number plates by some people on private/unregistered vehicles, ordered launch of a drive against them.

The Sindh Public Procurement Regulatory Authority proposed some 30 amendments to their rules. The chief minister constituted a committee under Adviser on Law Murtaza Wahab along with other officials to review the amendments.

The cabinet approved the bill submitted by the women development department called the ‘Sindh Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2018’ to address the issue of harassment at workplace through legal framework and directed the adviser on law to go through its clauses and send it to the assembly for approval.

#### ATC judge appointment

The Sindh cabinet on the recommendation of the Sindh High Court chief justice approved the appointment of Munir Ahmed Khawaja, a retired district and sessions judge, as a judge of the Anti-Terrorism Court, Shaheed Benazirabad.

Answering a question after the briefing of the cabinet decisions, Chief Minister’s Adviser on Information Murtaza Wahab brushed aside the impression of non-cooperation with the JIT constituted to probe money laundering. He said the record they had asked for was provided to them. At present, they have sought record of the last 10 years. “The provincial government was collecting the record and it would be in volumes and as soon as it is collected, it would be handed over to the JIT.

#### Ministers get portfolios

The Sindh chief minister has allocated portfolios to the four new ministers who were inducted in the Sindh cabinet on Monday. According to a notification, besides allocation of departments to the new members of the cabinet with readjustment in some portfolios of the old ministers, Syed Murad Ali Shah had also appointed six special assistants. They are Waqar Mehdi, Rashid Rabbani, Ashfaq Memon, Qasim Nabi, Nawab Wassan and Khatumal while Adviser to Chief Minister Mohammad Bux Mahar had been allocated portfolio of youth affairs.

The newly inducted ministers' portfolios are: Taimur Talpur, minister for information, science, technology, environment, climate change and coastal development; Awais Qadir Shah, minister for transport and mass transit; Ghulam Murtaza Baloch, minister for labour and human resources; Abdul Bari Pitafi, minister for livestock and fisheries; Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, currently minister for works and services, was given additional charge of religious affairs and prisons; Hari Ram, minister for minorities affairs and social welfare, would also look after the food department while Mukesh Kumar Chawla, in addition to excise and taxation, will also hold additional charge for parliamentary affairs.

Published in Dawn, October 17th, 2018.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1439457/cabinet-approves-rs725bn-poverty-reduction-programme-for-entire-province>

## OVER 500 CHILDREN DIED IN DROUGHT-HIT THAR THIS YEAR, MURAD TOLD

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated October 20, 2018

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah was on Friday told that the number of children that had died during 2018 in the desert region of Thar was highest in past four years.

Health Secretary Usman Chachar briefed the chief minister at a high-level meeting held here that over 505 children died in Thar during the current year.

He said 450 children died in the region in 2017; 479 died in 2016 and 398 children lost their lives in 2015.

He said that the deaths took place because of various reasons, including pre-term/low birth weight, birth asphyxia, severe pneumonia, neonatal sepsis, respiratory distress syndrome (RDS), acute malnutrition with complication, sepsis (under five) and diarrhoea.

The CM has asked public-sector medical universities to set up camps in the desert region

The chief minister said that despite making huge investment in every sector in Thar "we are still receiving news of infant and child deaths which is quite painful and depressing for me, therefore we have to make a holistic approach to resolve the issue for good".

He directed the health department to widely and properly implement the mother-child health programme in letter and spirit.

Medical varsities asked to set up camps

At the same meeting, the CM directed all public-sector medical universities to set up health camps in the desert region.

The meeting was attended by vice chancellors of different public and private sector universities, eight provincial ministers, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah and others.

He also issued directives to explore alternative employment opportunities for the people of the region to resolve the issue for good.

He directed the chief secretary to ensure implementation of family planning, nutrition programme and provision of clean drinking water by making all the closed reverse osmosis plants functional.

The meeting was also informed about the rainfall in different cities and towns of Thar.

The chief minister directed the chief secretary and Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah to review the Drought Mitigation Act and give a detailed presentation to him so that it could be implemented with necessary improvements.

“I am of the view that a Thar commission or authority be established to implement all the programmes under one roof,” he said.

167 dehs affected due to less rains

The chief minister was told that 167 dehs of Tharparkar were affected on account of untimely and inadequate rainfall during monsoon season.

“Wheat relief has been given to 276,152 heads of families in seven talukas of Thar at a scale of 50kg. Some 116,713 families have received wheat till Oct 16,” the meeting was told.

The chief secretary informed the CM that some 850 RO plants would be made functional by December.

The chief minister was also informed that 18 small dams, including 10 from annual development programme and eight from the public sector development programme, had been completed at a cost of Rs2.583 billion and nine others were being constructed at a cost of Rs1.2bn.

The meeting was informed that 587 RO plants were working in different areas of Thar, installation of 247 more RO plants was in progress while 834 would be installed by December.

The chief minister was told that 726,602 animals had been vaccinated. At this, CM Shah directed the livestock and wildlife departments to provide fodder, treatment of animals and wildlife in the remote areas.

The chief minister said that his government was making important interventions for poverty reduction. “Five goats and 10 hens are being distributed in each and every family in the remote areas and the programme would benefit 300 families. So far 256 families have taken benefit and 54 families are yet to receive.”

The CM directed all provincial ministers to keep visiting all government facilities such as schools, health facilities, RO plants/water schemes in Thar to keep a check on their performance.

He also directed the health department to establish a health information management system not only for Thar but for whole Sindh.

This system would not only expose the performance/negligence of each and every hospital but it would be helpful to make necessary interventions for improvement, he added.

Published in Dawn, October 20th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1440059/over-500-children-died-in-drought-hit-thar-this-year-murad-told>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 8TH TO OCTOBER 14TH 2018

THARIS DECRY GETTING ‘ROTTEN’ WHEAT

Hanif Samoon October 10, 2018

MITHI: Drought-hit Tharis continued their complaints that the Sindh government was distributing rotten wheat in the name of relief operation.

But Adviser to Chief Minister on Information, Law and Anti-corruption Barrister Murtaza Wahab has rejected the reports regarding distribution of substandard wheat.

He said that on the instruction of the CM, he along with Provincial Minister for Energy Imtiaz Ahmed Shaikh visited Tharparkar to ensure smooth relief measures for the drought-hit people, but there were no complaints.

They checked quality of wheat being distributed and weight of bags during the visit to Thar, which was found satisfactory, he said.

However, people visiting seven centres set up by the administration in the taluka headquarters of the desert district, including Mithi, Kaloji and other towns, alleged that officials of the revenue and food departments were giving rotten wheat to the beneficiaries registered by Nadra.

They deplored that despite their continued protests and media coverage of the problem, no action was taken against those involved in the “scam”.

Some officials, who wished not to be named, told local reporters that some beneficiaries were given the bags kept in the godowns.

Published in Dawn, October 10th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1437915/tharis-decry-getting-rotten-wheat>

## SINDH GOVT PROVIDES RELIEF FOR DROUGHT-HIT THAR

By Press Release

Published: October 10, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh chief minister’s (CM) Adviser on Information, Law and Anti-Corruption Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that despite the notices taken on Tharparkar’s situation by the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan, no steps have been taken by the federal government to help the drought-affected people. He said that the Sindh government was taking relief measures on its own. Barrister Wahab said this while addressing a crowded press conference at his office on Tuesday.

He said that on the directives of the Sindh CM, he along with the Sindh Energy Minister Imtiaz Ahmed Shaikh, visited Tharparkar to ascertain and ensure smooth relief measures for drought-hit people. “We went around the Reverse Osmosis (RO) plants, wheat distribution centres, godowns, health centres and Mithi hospital, and met people to be familiar with the ground realities,” he said. He rejected the reports regarding the distribution of substandard wheat, adding that they checked the quality of wheat being distributed and the weight of bags during their visit to Thar and found them to be satisfactory.

Responding to a query, the provincial advisor said that as per practice, Thar was declared a calamity-hit area due to inadequate rainfall by August 15, adding that the Sindh government had taken the decision in time to declare Tharparkar calamity-hit in the first cabinet meeting held on August 19, 2018. Barrister Wahab added that 366 points have been identified for the distribution of wheat so that the people from far-flung areas could get relief easily. He said that initially with the help of NADRA, 208,245 families were registered for wheat distribution, adding that 67,905 more heads of families who had not been included in the initial list, were being included on the demand of the people of Thar.

On another query, the provincial adviser said that RO plants became non-functional due to the delay in release of funds, adding that RO plants started working from Tuesday.



Barrister Wahab said that there was talk of dams in the country, adding that the Sindh government has completed the construction of 18 small dams in Thar without any help from the federal government.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 10th, 2018.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1822159/1-sindh-govt-provides-relief-drought-hit-thar/>

#### PPAF BECOMES OPERATIONAL IN SINDH RECORDER REPORT OCT 11TH, 2018 KARACHI

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has commenced its operation in Sindh. With a presence in 24 districts through 25 partner organisations, PPAF has already a grassroots network of 31,033 community organisations, 3,495 village organisations and 111 local support organisations.

The Provincial Advisory Committee of the PPAF for the Sindh province, (PAC-Sindh), held its first meeting on Tuesday, October 9 in Karachi, introducing committee members from the provincial government, PPAF Board and experts from relevant sectors and academia.

The first meeting laid the scope of engagement for the PAC-Sindh in relation to development needs of the province and PPAF's priority thematic and geographic areas. This includes a focus on health and nutrition, water, education, and livelihoods and financial inclusion.

The PAC-Sindh, chaired by director PPAF, Dr Aijaz Ahmed Qureshi, includes Dr Suleman Shaikh, director PPAF and secretary board of trustees, SZABIST, Karachi, Sadiqa Salahuddin, Member General Body PPAF and Executive Director, Indus Resource Center, as well as representatives from Planning & Development, Health and Social Welfare Departments, Govt of Sindh. Civil society/private sector representatives include Fawad Soomro, Head, Engro Foundation, and Kausar S Khan, Head, Behavioural and Research Sciences, Aga Khan University Karachi, and PPAF's Provincial Coordinator Samia Liaquat Ali Khan, Sr Group Head, Quality Assurance & Research Design.

In his welcome note Chairman PAC-Sindh, Dr Aijaz Ahmed Qureshi stressed on the dire need of poverty alleviation and explained that PPAF has undertaken the new PAC initiative to involve provincial government and civil society in the work in the province and to seek inputs from experts to create more meaningful impact in Sindh through direct programmes, collaborations and linkages.

The initiative aims at enhancing coordination with the governments at the provincial level in the light of 18th amendment in the constitution of Pakistan, he added.

The main session focused on the development context of the province. Samia Liaquat underscored PPAF's role in countering development challenges in the past and highlighted the opportunities available to bridge the existing gaps for future policies.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181011414253/>

#### POVERTY TAKES ITS TOLL RECORDER REPORT OCT 14TH, 2018 EDITORIAL

Poverty takes its toll; nine children died in a village in Sukkur district as a wall fell on them. The structure fell not because it lost its strength because of rain; nor was the area shaken by an earthquake. The wall collapsed because it was made of mud bricks, the only material the dirt poor owners of the house could afford to have. It could no longer stand on its sandy foundation. The local officials profusely sympathized with the bereaved families, but nothing beyond that. Even the hospital where four of the injured children were brought failed to save two of them. While death tiptoes to the rich it comes to the poor in great fury. No doubt there are islands of prosperity in Pakistan and its city

roads are cluttered with expensive cars and palatial dwellings. But beyond these islands, there is this vast ocean of poverty. How deep is poverty in Pakistan and is it going to go away anytime soon? Eminent economist Dr Kaiser Bengali depicts a frightening picture: “The richest 10 percent of Pakistanis pay 12 percent of their income in taxes while the poorest 10 percent end up giving 16 percent in taxes ... our growth level model just manifests increase in elite’s consumption patterns”. Since a large part of our national economy is undocumented, it works its way into the lives of people in myriad mysterious ways. “We do not have authenticated data to measure the actual level of income and wealth inequality in Pakistan and how in recent years the fortunes of rich increased,” says Oxfam Pakistan’s Country Director Mohammad Qizilbash. But what is known is that the minimum wage in Pakistan is but a “fraction of living wage on which a family of four can live a decent life in urban centres”. As for the rural Pakistan, the spectre of poverty walks tall and is too obvious – as it looms large over that village in Upper Sindh.

As pointed out by the latest Oxfam survey, every country has its own particular rich-poor wealth gap scenario. For instance, while Singapore and India fuel wealth gap, Indonesia and South Korea are trying to reduce inequality, mainly through policies on social spending, tax and labour rights. But on the whole the worldwide inequality has reached a ‘crisis level’, says the Oxfam survey. Tackling inequality does not depend on a country’s wealth but on its political will. Hong Kong is one of the richest economies but its government “ignores growing wealth gap and social inequality” as it “puts too much of its resources into economic and infrastructure development, and tends to neglect the situation of the underprivileged”. In Pakistan too, we neglected the plight of the poor and invested heavily in development of mega, urban-based infrastructures. Consequently, the Oxfam’s Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) survey has ranked Pakistan at number 139 out of 152 countries. In education, health and social protection it is at 146. Of course, there is no magic wand with the new government to effect immediate reversal of this trend, but there is the urgent need to take that road. If China is a soft superpower today, it is because of its commitment to augment its people’s potential by providing them opportunities to have good education and sound health. Here in Pakistan these essential inputs that can enrich our massive human capital have been criminally neglected. These two sectors are being treated as stepchildren. Were the residents of that village, which lost its nine children, economically comfortable they would not have overlooked the danger embedded in that crumbling mud wall. And were the hospital where the injured were brought well-stocked with life-saving medicines and proper care setup the two who died there could have been saved. There is the dire need to match government policies with the ground realities. Both at private and public levels, meaningful and constructive policies and practices should be devised in order to stem the rising tide of socio-political and economic polarization.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/10/20181014415098/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1TH TO OCTOBER 7TH 2018

MURAD ORDERS OFFICIALS TO CONDUCT POVERTY SURVEY IN SINDH

Habib Khan Ghori October 02, 2018

**KARACHI:** Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has decided to conduct a scientific survey to assess and measure ratio of poverty in the province before launching a poverty reduction programme.

The decision was taken in a meeting held here on Monday at the CM House to review Sindh’s development programme.

The meeting was chaired by CM Shah and attended by Planning and Development Board chairman Mohammad Waseem, Principal Secretary to CM Sohail Rajput, Finance Secretary Dr Noor Alam, P&D Secretary Fatah Tunio and other officials.

The chief minister said that poverty was a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.

Discusses plan to beautify district and taluka headquarters

“It depends not only on income but also on access to services,” Mr Shah said, adding that he wanted to conduct a scientific study or survey to measure the poverty ratio persisting in the province so that it would help to address the real issues to improve overall life.

He directed the P&D chairman to work out a detailed chart or yardstick to measure poverty in the province.

The CM was informed that the bureau of statistics was competent enough to conduct the survey.

The P&D chairman said he would work out a chart and get it approved from the chief minister to start the survey all over Sindh.

The chief minister said that he also had a plan to beautify each and every district and taluka headquarters in the first phase and villages in the second phase.

The beautification plan will include removal of encroachments, improvement or reconstruction of roads, construction of a proper drainage system, provision of clean drinking water schemes and improved health services.

Besides, he said, under the regional development plan a separate programme for provision of missing facilities, including education, was in progress.

He directed the P&D chairman to start working on the annual development programme of financial year 2019-20 from next month.

“I want to start new development schemes in districts which preferably could be completed within a year,” he said and added that he would declare some model villages where all facilities would also be provided.

In this connection, a team had been constituted to check the quality of development works and ensure their timely completion.

#### KBA delegation calls on CM

The chief minister also met a 17-member delegation of the Karachi Bar Association (KBA) on Monday at CM House.

The delegation apprised him of the issues being faced by the legal fraternity.

Murtaza Wahab, the CM’s adviser on law and information, also attended the meeting.

Acknowledging the sacrifices of the legal community for restoration of democracy, the CM said that he had special regards for them.

“The father of the nation Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was a leading lawyer and similarly PPP founder [late] prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was also a lawyer and my father was also a prominent lawyer,” he said while explaining his strong bonds with the legal fraternity.

He assured the delegation that he would visit the KBA soon and listen to and resolve their problems then and there.

Published in Dawn, October 2nd, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1436203/murad-orders-officials-to-conduct-poverty-survey-in-sindh>

POVERTY IN SINDH

Editorial October 03, 2018

ALLEVIATING poverty and inequality calls for effective policy intervention that is only possible when extensive data is collected through household surveys. Such was the realisation that prompted the Sindh government on Monday to announce it would conduct a survey prior to implementing a poverty-alleviation programme. Unfortunate delays in providing relief to underprivileged Sindh districts, particularly drought-ridden Thar, has resulted in severe malnutrition and stunting. For relief to come to these desperate communities, the government must collect data to identify areas where socioeconomic disparity has caused much suffering. This information will help it design projects that ensure the provision of basic human needs such as food, safe drinking water and healthcare. Moreover, the authorities must know that only national housing or living standards measurement surveys, for instance, will furnish essential data on income, consumption, health, education etc. Flawed surveys result when the sample size is unrepresentative or the questionnaire worded incorrectly. While these considerations may be apparent to Mr Shah's team, international agencies that have tried and tested methodologies to enhance data quality could also be consulted.

Officials in the last government might have claimed that Pakistan saw a decline in poverty levels, but the scale of the challenge to offer relief to the vulnerable is still huge. Tailoring development projects in line with resources especially at a time of economic downturn is imperative. While the prime minister has taken note of starvation and poverty in Thar, as always the onus lies on the PPP-led government to provide relief to its long-suffering constituents. If Pakistan is to meet its UN SDG poverty eradication target by 2030, concrete steps to boost economic activity and develop institutions and processes are mandatory. Here the key question is how best to create decent living standards. Only information-based action plans that are implemented and go beyond political rhetoric will earn this government respect on the world stage and acceptance from its own people.

Published in Dawn, October 3rd , 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1436519/poverty-in-sindh>

## WORLD BANK TO HELP PAKISTAN ALLEVIATE STUNTING

By Asma Ghani

Published: October 3, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank and national health ministry on Tuesday agreed to work together on the issues of rising population and malnutrition crisis in the country.

This came during a meeting between WB Country Director Patchamuthu Illangovan and National Health Regulations and Coordination Aamer Mehmood Kiyani in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The WB offered to bring experts from the countries having success in both the areas to share their experiences. It has also offered to share its analysis on health-related issues with the ministry.

Moreover, a conference is tentatively planned in early 2019 involving the policy makers and implementers.

Illangovan highlighted the fact that World Bank had been supporting Pakistan in various development projects and reiterated its commitment to extending all its support in the future also.

Kiyani said Pakistan's population is still very young with 62 per cent of the people living under the age of 30. He described the human capital as a driving factor in the economic growth.

"Pakistan is also facing a crisis in terms of malnutrition that is amongst the worst in the world and is losing about 3 per cent of its GDP to stunting every year," said the minister.

Although the recent national health survey showed an improvement from the past with the stunting rate at 37.6 per cent, "there is a severe disparity in the nutrition status across the provinces", he added.

The percentage of stunted children declined from 45 per cent in 2012-13 to 38 per cent in the 2017-18 survey, according to the minister.

The two sides concluded that work on policies regarding these thematic areas of bilateral interest in the light of best practices would be undertaken, together with designing and implementation of the projects addressing the identified themes.

It was also decided to set up achievable targets to measure the success that would be mutually negotiated.

Kiyani said that a coordination meeting would be held with federal and provincial partners on population and nutrition. Additionally a media campaign would also be launched to promote a healthy living, he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1816928/1-world-bank-help-pakistan-alleviate-stunting/>

## SINDH GOVT APPROVES RS4 BILLION TO REDUCE POVERTY

By Our Correspondent

Published: October 6, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh government approved on Friday provision of funds worth Rs4 billion for a poverty reduction programme which was initiated in the province on a pilot-basis nine years ago. According to officials, this intervention will cover Umerkot, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Khairpur, Badin and Thatta districts. The Sindh government has already declared these areas 'calamity-hit' due to low rainfall in the outgoing monsoon season.

The funds were approved during a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah at the Chief Minister House. Officials in the Sindh government said that six districts have been selected in the first phase of the programme while it will be replicated in around 16 districts with a total investment of Rs14.2 billion. "This decision has been taken in light of the PPP [Pakistan Peoples Party] manifesto. It [aims to] develop a good impact in the rural areas," the CM said.

The meeting was attended by Planning and Development Chairperson Mohammad Waseem, Principal Secretary to the CM Sajjid Jamal Abro, Sindh Rural Support Organisation Chairperson (SRSO) Shoaib Sultan Khan, SRSO Chief Executive Officer Dittal Kalhoro and other concerned officers.

The chief minister said that the provincial government has already launched the Rs3.36 billion Union Council Based Poverty Reduction Programme (UCBPRP) with specific objectives to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of the poor and marginalised communities through social mobilisation, capacity development, asset creation and income generation.

He said that the programme was a symbol of the performance of the provincial government in service delivery to the poorest rural population through social mobilisation. It aims to empower the local communities by socially and economically enabling them to improve their livelihood and increase their earnings through the Income Generating Grants (IGG) and a community fund giving interest-free loans.

Shah termed the programme as unique. According to him, it has focused on women empowerment and livelihood of the poorest households, identified through a scientific survey.

"This not only gives them the confidence in their ability and direct exposure to the market, but also enables them to become economically independent," he said.

The chief minister said that the programme not only focuses on social sector improvement by addressing the indicators of health, poverty, environment, social security, shelter, employment and basic livelihood, but also helps achieve the objectives and targets of universally-accepted Sustainable Development Goals — of which Pakistan is a signatory.

Initially launched in only two districts – Shikapur and Kashmore – on a pilot basis in 2009 for a period of 30 months, the programme achieved its desired objectives of organising households into a community and providing rural communities a common platform to discuss and resolve socio-economic issues.

Realising the importance of mobilising communities for collective action and for sustained reduction in poverty, the programme was further extended to two more districts — Jacobabad and Tharparkar — in 2010 with an allocation of more than Rs2 billion.

Waseem, briefing the meeting about the UCBPRP, said that it achieved great success in these four districts. It included coverage of 175 union councils, organisations of 343,084 households at community and village level and distribution of income generation grants and interest-free loans to 10,043 and 112,406 households respectively.

He said that under the programme, 9,072 low cost housing units were provided to shelter-less households, 1,124 households were supplied water, 34,211 persons were imparted vocational training, 114,328 households were provided protection of micro-health insurance plan, 195 schools were made functional and 43 small villages were rehabilitated.

Waseem said that considering the success of the programme, the project is being expanded to another six districts. This scheme is being implemented through SRSO.

Published in The Express Tribune, October 6th, 2018.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1819327/1-sindh-govt-approves-rs4-billion-reduce-poverty/>

## November 2018

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 19TH TO NOVEMBER 25TH 2018*

### **RURAL POVERTY A STARK REALITY**

ANDLEEB ABBAS | NOV 19TH, 2018 | ARTICLE

Some oft-repeated statements – the country has come a long way; growth rates are increasing; Internet growth is one of the highest in Pakistan; the new airport at Islamabad is really comparable to many international airports; and retail industry is booming. These statements are indicators of all the trends signaling a country ready to take off, till you see the man living in rural Pakistan. Rural-urban difference is always there in most countries; however, these differences have to be gauged on many criteria. The gap between the standard of living of the rich and the poor and the proportion of the population living in them is what shows the story behind the statements as does the rate of urbanization in a country.

The fact that Growth Rates have increased from 2.5% to 5.8% of the GDP in the last decade but the difference between rich and poor has skewed higher is an indication of the growth misdirection. The World Bank study that has researched on poverty in rural areas of Pakistan has made this shocking revelation that rural poverty has increased up to 80 percent in the last one decade. This study was carried out for the years 2004 to 2014, a time which covers both the dictatorial rule and the democratic term. According to a World Bank report titled ‘State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan’, Balochistan has the highest rural poverty rate, with over 62 percent of its rural population living below the poverty line. Gap between rural and urban poverty is the widest in Sindh at almost 30 percent. While urban-rural gap in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was 13 and 15 percentage points, respectively.

The problem with macroeconomics is that Growth becomes the end goal and most economists justify pursuit of growth by explaining it through the trickle-down approach where the belief is that sooner or later growth will reach the poor as the expansion of the economy will lead to more jobs and more social benefits. However, as we have seen in the case of Pakistan the additional growth has only helped the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer. Firstly,

the quantity of trickle-down is a few micro drops and the quality of these micro drops is based on some non-essential development projects doled out near elections that are not really contributing to the real development of the region.

Rural areas comprising 60 percent of Pakistan are the most neglected parts of the country. Governments normally focus on main cities for development especially metro cities. Most governments in Pakistan have focused on provincial capitals. Lahore is an example of this focus as Punjab's 58 percent budget is spent on Lahore while the rest of 51% budget is divided over 107 cities. When you compare a city like Rajanpur and Layyah in South Punjab to Lahore, it is like comparing the third world to the first world. The infrastructure development that you see in Lahore and Islamabad is nowhere to be seen in most of the cities. Even more abysmal is the human development situation. The literacy levels are sub normal, health facilities nominal and job opportunities dismal.

Successive governments have tried to support the agricultural sector on which the livelihood of most rural sector depends. Various farmer/agri packages have been offered, however, very little improvement has taken place. Support prices are mere slogans, farmer access to market difficult and loan provisions are always diverted to infrastructure development in urban areas in the budget revisions. Even if all these incentives were given in rural areas the real differences in the lives of farmers will not take place if an integrated rural development program is not introduced.

Stunting and poor health have not been tackled in rural areas on an emergency basis. Severe lack of WASH infrastructure, i.e., water and sanitation hygiene facilities cause damage to the child health. Infant mortality rate, according to the UNICEF report released in 2018, has become the highest in the world. According to the World Bank 2018 study, "Lack of investment in fecal waste management, combined with the expansion of low-quality toilets, is the most critical determinant of weak nutritional outcomes in Pakistan". 42 percent of households in rural Punjab, 60 percent in rural KP and 82 percent in rural Sindh and Balochistan have no drainage system as the metro cities get maximum benefit of these already inadequate WASH infrastructure allocations. The total per capita allocation for Lahore was almost 18 times higher than the average for all other districts in Punjab combined. Meanwhile, Karachi received almost 100 times more in per capita terms than the other districts of Sindh.

The integrated approach also requires that these physical facilities are combined with human and social development initiatives to develop a proactive and pre-emptive approach to the uplifting of the rural areas. Literacy rates and skill development should be part of the approach. While social safety net programs help give relief to rural poverty they are not sustainable as they make the recipient dependent rather than independent. Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has provided a social safety net but has not succeeded in breaking the poverty circles especially in rural areas. Simple cash transfers are not the effective poverty breakers. What is needed is to resort to more and more conditional cash transfers. These cash transfers should be tied to education and skill building incentives. Similarly, the introduction of health cards for treatment for the very poor is a good way of providing healthcare but again preventive health awareness programmes are necessary to reduce the incidence of diseases.

Many economists propose more urbanization but in Pakistan the lack of urban planning has put tremendous pressure on city development as well. With the lack of job opportunities in cities and higher cost of living, as the rural population transfers to cities, it finds no place to work and live, thus turning to violence and crime. Crime rates in Karachi and Lahore have shot up dramatically. Young, unemployed, unengaged youngsters are involved in mugging and dacoits due to a lack of direction and future.

Integrated rural development requires effective policymaking and governance to ensure service delivery. The best mechanism to ensure equity in rural Vs Urban development is to have an empowered local body system that is decentralized right down to village level as it was in KP where the results show maximum decrease in rural poverty. As the decision making and authority to develop is shared with those who are closest to the problems, the level and quality of ownership, engagement and development will experience a real difference.

QUETTA : The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in collaboration with the government of Balochistan on Monday inaugurated two projects in Quetta for the rural communities of the province dependent on agriculture for livelihood.

The projects have the financial support of the Australian government's Department of Foreign Aid and Trade (DFAT), according to a press release.

Balochistan Chief Minister's Adviser on Livestock and Dairy Development Mitta Khan Kakar, Australian Deputy High Commissioner Brek Batley and FAO Representative in Pakistan Minà Dowlatchahi were the key guests on the occasion.

The FAO representative said women made huge contributions to the rural economy by engaging in activities on and off farms and by looking after the household and family nutrition.

"Investing in women's empowerment along with men helps eradicate poverty," she said, adding that improved food security and nutrition helped achieve economic growth.

Building upon its first phase, the Australian Balochistan Agri Business Programme (AusABBA) Phase II is a six-year partnership between the Australian government and the FAO. As many as 175,000 male and female farmers in Chagai, Kech, Kharan, Nushki, Panjgur and Washuk districts of Balochistan benefitted from the first phase, says the press release.

In Phase II, resource-poor male and female crop and livestock farmers will be organised in informal Farmer Marketing Collectives (FMCs) and connected to markets for Balochistan-specific commodities such as onion, fruits, livestock, wool, meat, poultry, and dates.

It is expected that traders, processors, wholesalers and fresh buyers of modern and traditional retail and wholesale markets would also benefit from the linkages created as a result.

The second project is also linked with the AusABBA II, helping empower women associated with agriculture in Balochistan. As per statistics cited in the statement, around 445 women have already been trained in agribusiness.

Women enterprise development will be the main focus of the project. After its completion, "10 women agri enterprises comprising of 200 women would be able to operate their own businesses and increase their income by 25 per cent. In addition, 400 women will receive literacy and numeracy training in Chagai, Nushki, and Quetta".

FAO Project Manager in Balochistan Marcel Stallen, Australian High Commission's First Secretary for Development Dave Preston and senior government officials were also present on the occasion.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1850837/1-fao-balochistan-govt-unveil-two-projects/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 12TH TO NOVEMBER 18TH 2018

KP TOPS LIST: INCIDENCE OF POVERTY DECLINES SIGNIFICANTLY: WB

RECORDER REPORT | NOV 14TH, 2018 | ISLAMABAD

The incidence of poverty declined significantly in Pakistan where Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) saw the largest decline in poverty followed by Punjab and Sindh while Balochistan remained the poorest province in the country with a headcount poverty rate of almost 57 percent, says the World Bank (WB).



Advisor to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Malik Amin Aslam Khan said that investment in human development and effective local government system in KP were the major reasons behind the reduction in poverty. However, WB official termed post-disaster (earthquake, floods, displacement) massive infrastructure development as one of the reasons for poverty reduction in the province.

The WB's latest report titled 'When Water Becomes a Hazard: The State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan and its Impact on Child Stunting' states that Pakistan has made significant progress in reducing poverty, improving dietary diversity and reducing open defecation. Despite this, critical markers of child health – rates of diarrhoea and stunting – still do not show any real improvement.

“The incidence of poverty declined significantly in Pakistan over the past decade and a half, falling from 64 percent in 2001 to about 30 percent in 2014. The reduction was coupled with an increase in asset ownership and dietary diversity, with substantial gains in both in the bottom quintile. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) saw the largest decline in poverty, followed by Punjab and Sindh. Balochistan remained the poorest province in the country, with a headcount poverty rate of almost 57 percent in 2014,” maintained the report.

The report states that the alarming state of water supply and sanitation in Pakistan is creating major health hazards for the entire population and young children are particularly at risk.

The report finds that bacterial contamination of surface and groundwater is on the rise because of the lack of treatment of human waste. Rural areas where the majority of poor households reside are the worst affected. Contamination levels are much higher in poorer and more rural districts and there is virtually no treatment of water at the household level.

Faecal waste is also finding its way into surface soil and into the water used for crop irrigation. This in turn contaminates food supplies which find their way into urban centres posing health hazards for millions of city dwellers. Young children are most at risk due to diarrhoea as well as growth faltering due to environmental enteropathy, which limits the absorption of nutrients even during periods when the child shows no signs of diarrhoea-eventually leading to stunting.

“This report provides timely evidence and clear policy advice on the importance of safe water and sanitation for addressing malnutrition”, said Illango Patchamuthu, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan in a message. “Stunting is a serious problem in Pakistan. It severely impacts the learning of children which puts them at a permanent disadvantage in the age of the knowledge economy. This requires urgent attention to the treatment of water and investment in the management of faecal waste,” he added.

Given the gravity of the problem and the levels of investment required, the report recommends a targeted and multi-tiered approach. Investments in faecal waste management systems as well as in the provision of safe drinking water need to begin on an urgent basis but these will take time to reach scale. In the meantime, there are a number of relatively low-cost interventions that can be started immediately and at scale, to protect young children. These include efforts to encourage the point of use treatment of water and community and neighbourhood-based interventions to contain exposure to faecal waste so that the oral-faecal route for the transmission of disease can be weakened, if not broken.

“There are huge disparities across the country in the quality of water and sanitation infrastructure. Rural areas across Pakistan have seen little or no investment in publicly provided piped drinking water, sewer connections or the treatment of human waste,” said Dr Ghazala Mansuri, the author of the report. “But even the most developed urban areas are not immune. Untreated waste water is mixed with ground and surface water to irrigate crops, so these pathogens also find their way to urban households. The key issue is that in such a context no one is protected.”

Targeting available resources to the poorest and least well served districts would not only maximise the direct impact of public spending, it would also reduce the negative spillovers created by poor quality sanitation and water to neighbouring non-poor areas creating a virtuous win-win cycle for all.

“Pakistan’s long-term aim must be adequate and safe piped water supply with metering and realistic tariffs,” said Farhan Sami, also an author of the report. “To accomplish this, we will need to safely move faecal waste away from human settlements and treat it adequately.”

Advisor to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam Khan said that Pakistan is facing the highest ratio of 45 percent of stunting growth rate compared to average 39 percent in the region. He further said that government wants to change budget priority and make it performance based. He further said the PM has launched Clean and Green Pakistan campaign which is based on five pillars including tree, solid waste management, sanitation, and safe drinking water.

He further said that after the 18th Constitutional amendment, there are capacity challenges. He said that in collaboration with provinces policy would be devised to overcome climate change, increasing population, sanitation and water challenges, but the federal government does not want to set unrealistic targets. He further said that private sector would be engaged as public sector alone could not achieve its milestone.

The report states that the 18th Constitutional amendment has shifted all responsibilities in the water and sanitation sector from the federal to provincial and local governments, which weakens the federal role of setting common policy standards across the country. The report states that four out of five poor Pakistanis still live in rural areas, and there are large differences in the level and rate of progress on poverty reduction across districts.

Rural areas continue to lag behind their urban counterparts in terms of both poverty and access to basic services like health and education and the gaps persist across all quintiles of the income distribution. District-level poverty is equalising over time, but there is a clear north-south divide. Both within and across provinces, the poorest districts registered the largest declines in poverty, but most of the poorest districts are in Balochistan, followed by Sindh and southern Punjab.

A north-south divide is also evident within the two most populous provinces of the country, with the bordering districts of southern Punjab and northern Sindh registering the highest poverty rates within the two provinces.

Urbanisation is positively correlated with poverty reduction, but significant pockets of high poverty exist in better-off districts and large urban centres. Within districts, urbanisation tends to be positively correlated with the pace of poverty reduction.

The districts of Hyderabad in Sindh and Musakhel and Killa Abdullah in Balochistan increased their urban share by about 23 and 25 percentage points, respectively, for example, and saw the largest reductions in poverty. But, pockets of high poverty exist within better-off areas.

Pakistan continues to lag behind its neighbours and income peers in terms of child nutritional outcomes. Despite reductions in poverty and increases in WASH access, stunting rates remain high. Indeed, stunting rates were somewhat higher in 2011 (44 percent) than in 2001 (42 percent). At the provincial level, 38 percent of all children in Punjab, 47 percent in Sindh, 49 percent in KP, and 53 percent in Balochistan were stunted in 2011. Although the rate of stunting is lowest in Punjab, a majority of Pakistan’s stunted children live there, due to its large population share. More recent data for Punjab and Sindh from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey shows no improvement in these rates. The incidence of diarrhoea – a critical factor behind immediate weight loss, intestinal damage, and mal-absorption of nutrients – also remained at 22 percent between 2006 and 2012 and again shows no improvement in the more recent MICS for Punjab and Sindh.

Higher income and good hygiene and care practices can moderate the impact of low-quality water and sanitation on nutritional outcomes. The decline in poverty has likely prevented health outcomes like stunting from worsening. An increase in household consumption is associated with a reduction in the risk of stunting and diarrhoea, especially among older children, because richer households can afford better preventive care (use of oral re-hydration salts or other treatment of diarrhoea) and a more nutritious diet.

To make matters worse, resource allocation is not aligned with sector needs. Moreover, despite insufficient capacity, there is little effort to engage the private sector in service delivery. Without the technical capacity and the financial budget for operations and maintenance (O&M), these communities, which are poor and lack capacity, are set to fail in managing local infrastructure. Unsurprisingly, about a third of all schemes are non-functional. Fourth, inadequate information management systems mean that data on service delivery are not systematically collected.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181114423489/>

## POVERTY & POISON FOR DRINKING

I.A. Rehman November 15, 2018

ONE always had doubts about the reduction in poverty levels, from 64 per cent in 2001 to 30pc in 2014, being uniform across the country. Now the discrepancies between urban and rural areas and within metropolitan centres as revealed in a new World Bank report should serve as an eye-opener to anyone in a position of authority.

The report, titled *When Water Becomes a Hazard: A Diagnostic Report on the State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan and its Impact on Child Stunting*, finds large “spatial disparities in poverty levels” and “in the pace of poverty reduction”. Over the past decade and a half, “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa saw the largest decline in poverty, followed by Punjab and Sindh” but in Balochistan, the poorest province in the country, the poverty rate in 2014 was a hefty 57pc.

Neither this nor the finding that rural areas lag behind the urban parts in terms of both poverty and access to basic services (education and health) should cause as much surprise as the disclosure about pockets of high poverty inside well-off districts, and that “districts that host large cities like Lahore, Rawalpindi and Faisalabad have much higher levels of within-district inequality than smaller districts”.

The failure to manage fecal sludge or waste water poses a grave threat to public health in rural Pakistan.

The focus of the report is on “the relationship between poverty, access to water and sanitation, and the nutritional status of children — especially child stunting” and it brings out the havoc that is being caused by the non-availability of safe water for drinking and other purposes. After noting a substantial reduction in open defecation — from 29pc in 2004-05 to 13pc in 2014-15 — due to increased access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities throughout the country, the report dwells on the gigantic failure to prevent water pollution. The rural areas have much less access to WASH facilities than their urban compatriots, and “the public sector provides virtually no piped water or sanitation in rural areas”.

The failure to manage fecal sludge or waste water poses a grave threat to public health in rural Pakistan. About 42pc of households in rural Punjab, 60pc in rural KP and 82pc in rural Sindh and Balochistan have no drainage system worth the name. “Untreated fecal waste water seeps into groundwater aquifers or drains into surface water, polluting both. Fecal sludge also contaminates the soil.”

The report concludes: “Lack of investment in fecal waste management, combined with the expansion of low-quality toilets, is the most critical determinant of weak nutritional outcomes in Pakistan.”

One factor of the poor WASH infrastructure in rural Pakistan highlighted in the report is the preferential allocation of resources to provincial capitals from 2004 to 2015. The total per capita allocation for Lahore was almost 18 times higher than the average for all other districts in Punjab combined. Meanwhile, Karachi received almost 100 times more in per capita terms than the other districts of Sindh.

The report makes a number of salutary recommendations that both the federal and provincial governments should seriously ponder over, because the inequalities between urban and rural areas and within urban settlements are perhaps the single biggest problem in the country. The recommendations are as follows:

— “Policy emphasis needs to shift from a focus on improving access to improving the quality and safety of WASH infrastructure and the safe management of human waste.”

— “Institutional structure at the provincial and local governments should be matched with their responsibilities for service delivery, and the lack of institutional coordination mechanisms and short-term planning horizons should be remedied.”

— “Improve technical capacity within providing agencies.”

— “Monitor the [WASH] sector and develop performance assessment metrics.”

— “Improve water quality on an urgent basis.”

— “Improve the targeting of resources to communities most in need and raise annual national spending on the sector to 1.4pc of GDP.”

While one should like to thank the World Bank for reminding us of the hazards to children’s health and the dangers of bringing up a generation that will be mentally and physically incapable of taking the nation forward, or even meeting the challenges of living in the modern world, the theme and findings of the report are not unfamiliar to us. Quite a few Pakistani economists and social activists have, at different times and in different ways, drawn attention to the grim consequences of both inter- region and intra-region inequalities, and called for special efforts for the uplift of the rural masses.

The proposition that there is a strong correlation between urbanisation and poverty reduction and improvement in access to water, sanitation and hygiene arrangements is not new either. Many decades ago, the level of development by a state began to be measured in terms of the access of its population, including those living outside cities, to urban facilities, ie safe water for drinking, electricity, schools near the homestead, minimum essential health cover and opportunities for gainful work. This model has often been recommended for Pakistan as it promises a decline in the birth rate, infant and maternal mortality, and in migration to cities.

However, there is a limit to which urbanisation and improved service delivery can enable the people of Pakistan to reduce poverty and overcome the hazards to people’s well-being caused by the absence of or inadequacies in water, sanitation and hygiene management.

In order to ensure that the entire population of the country can be rid of poverty and can overcome the hazards of consuming contaminated water, it will be necessary to liberate the people of the hydra-headed curse of an iniquitous land ownership pattern, feudal culture and patriarchy. Without a meaningful advance in these directions, a substantial part of the Pakistani population will remain condemned to increasing poverty, to living in urban slums, to non-realisation of women’s potential to contribute to progress, and to stunting in children.

## POVERTY DECLINES SIGNIFICANTLY IN PAKISTAN, SAYS WB REPORT

BY APP , (LAST UPDATED NOVEMBER 14, 2018)

ISLAMABAD: Headcount poverty in Pakistan fell 35 percentage points between 2001-02 and 2013-14, from 64.3 per cent to 29.5 per cent, said a World Bank report on “the state of water supply, sanitation and poverty in Pakistan and its impact on child stunting”.

According to the report, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), which started out as the poorest of Pakistan’s four provinces in 2001/02, ended the period as its second richest province, closing almost all of its 13 percentage point gap with Punjab, the richest province in the country.

The provincial headcount rates in 2013-14 were 34.2 per cent for Sindh, 27 per cent for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and 25 per cent for Punjab. Balochistan remained the poorest province in Pakistan, with a headcount rate of 56.8 per cent.

The decline in poverty in Balochistan was smaller (less than 15 percentage points), and also more volatile, possibly because of the multiple challenges of remoteness, low connectivity, a semi-nomadic population, and conflict that it faces. In line with the decline in poverty, a number of other indicators of well-being also improved.

In all quintiles, the share of the household budget allocated to nonfood items rose, food consumption patterns shifted toward a more diverse and expensive diet, and asset ownership grew.

The share of non-food expenditure for the bottom quintile grew to 46 per cent by 2014. The consumption of nutrient-rich foods like meat, fish, eggs, dairy, fruits, and vegetables increased, while the share of cereals, which provide the cheapest calories, but are low in nutrition, declined from 33 per cent to 29 per cent, the report added.

Even the poorest households increased their ownership of more expensive assets, such as motorcycles, refrigerators, televisions, and washing machines, and reduced their ownership of relatively inexpensive assets, such as bicycles and radios.

The decline in poverty has not reduced the urban-rural gap by much. Rural areas in Pakistan remain much poorer than urban areas and are far more disadvantaged in all aspects of service delivery.

The poverty headcount rate in rural Pakistan is twice that in urban areas (36 per cent versus 18 per cent), and the gap has remained virtually unchanged since 2001-02.

Combined with the slow pace of urbanisation (only about 35 per cent of Pakistan’s population lived in urban areas in 2014), this gap means that 80 per cent of Pakistan’s poor continue to live in rural areas.

Across provinces, Balochistan has by far the highest rural poverty rate, with more than 62 per cent of its rural population living below the poverty line. However, the gap between rural and urban poverty is by far the widest in Sindh at almost 30 percentage points.

In contrast, the urban-rural gap in Punjab and KP was 13 and 15 percentage points, respectively. Rural households also face a substantial disadvantage in virtually all aspects of service delivery.

Nationally, the rural net enrollment rate is 13 percentage points lower for primary school and 11 percentage points lower for middle school than in urban areas.

For girls, these gaps stand at 17 and 14 percentage points, respectively. The rural female literacy rate, at 28 per cent, is also less than half that of urban areas.

Rural children are 8.5 percentage points less likely than urban children to have adequate immunisation by age three, and rural women are 10 percentage points less likely to receive prenatal care, 28 percentage points less likely to give birth in a facility or hospital, and 12 percentage points less likely to receive postnatal care.

Districts wise poverty data shows that districts vary widely in poverty, with the richest district (Abbottabad, KP) at a headcount rate of 5.8 per cent and the poorest district (Washuk, Balochistan) at 72.5 per cent.

Much of this variation reflects differences in poverty across provinces. The vast majority of the 40 poorest districts are in Balochistan, followed by Sindh.

Only three districts each in Punjab and KP fall in this set, and they are not among the poorest in the group. Not a single district in Balochistan is among the richest 40, and only Karachi and Hyderabad in Sindh fall in this set.

The divide between KP and Punjab (in the north) and Sindh and Balochistan (in the south) is apparent and quite stark.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/11/14/poverty-rate-in-pakistan-falls-from-64-3-to-29-5-per-cent-wb-report/>

## POVERTY AND SINDH

Muhammad Abbas Khaskheli

November 18, 2018

A recent World Bank report, titled 'The state of water supply, sanitation and poverty in Pakistan', has categorically defined the ratio and causes of poverty in different provinces and districts of the country.

This report can serve as a useful guide for Pakistan's policymakers and government representatives because it offers blueprints on what steps ought to be taken to combat this menace. As per the report, many of the facts and figures have remained constant for a long time. This implies that little or no attempt has been made by the concerned authorities to get to the bottom of these issues that pose a serious threat to society. For instance, the poverty rate in the rural regions of Pakistan is 36 percent. Meanwhile, in the urban belt, the poverty rate stands is 18 percent.

Since 2001, these figures have largely remained unchanged. Drawing attention to the one of the primary causes of poverty, the report states that owing to the snail's pace at which industrial growth has taken place in Pakistan, there hasn't been as sharp an increase in urbanisation as many had expected. Currently, only 35 percent of the country's total population is lives in the cities. This indicates that a large part of the population still lives in the remote rural regions of the country.

Similarly, 80 percent of the country's poor live in rural areas. Many of them don't have the same degree of access to the basic necessities of life, such as healthcare facilities, education, drinking water, electricity and roads, as people living in the urban areas do.

In rural areas, the enrolment rate of boys at primary schools stands 13 percent whereas the number of boys enrolled at secondary schools stands is 11 percent less than what it is in urban areas. For girls, the figures stand at 17 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

Among all the provinces, Balochistan has been declared as the poorest province of the country where 62 percent of the total population face extreme deprivation and live below the poverty line. In Sindh, there is huge gap in the quality of life between the rural and urban population, which is estimated to be around 30 percent. In Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this figure stands 13 percent and 15 percent, respectively.

If someone wants to see this gap between the rural and urban population, he wouldn't have to go too far. These disparities can be observed if we compare the standard of life in Karachi with living standard in villages that are situated near the city. While travelling toward Thatta via the National Highway, we realise that the villages along both sides of the highway lack proper schools, health centres and safe drinking water facilities. The situation becomes worse when we visit remote villages of the province where people don't even have access to reach cities. In our modern age, there are hundreds of villages in Sindh where people have never seen Karachi or Hyderabad. They don't even have any idea about what large cities look like. The situation in Balochistan is not too different from Sindh.

Report also reveals that Abbottabad is Pakistan's richest district where poverty rate is only 5.8 percent while Balochistan's Washuk district is the country's poorest district where poverty rate stands at 72.5 percent.

Most of the 40 poorest districts of Pakistan belong to Balochistan and Sindh while neither of 40 richest districts of Pakistan belongs to Balochistan. Karachi and Hyderabad are only two districts of Sindh in the list of Pakistan's 40 richest districts. Karachi is ranked third among the richest cities of the country while Lahore is ranked sixth in the same list.

A majority of the country's poor population lives in well-off cities like Karachi, Lahore and Faisalabad. The poverty rate of Karachi is only 8.9 percent. But overall, the city bears the burden of 2.5 percent of the country's poor. Meanwhile, Lahore's poverty rate is 2.2 percent. If the poor population of these two cities is combined, it will be equal to the population of 10 of the poorest districts of the country where the poverty rate is six or seven times more than these cities.

The report states that Sindh and Balochistan are poorer than Punjab and KP. Sindh's rural population typically depends on agriculture and the other fields related to the agricultural sector. But for a long time, the sector is in a critical state owing to some adverse techniques or manmade practices used by locals as well as the lack of attention received by government entities.

In 2013, the World Bank issued a report regarding the agricultural crises in Sindh. It stated: "Since 1999, the per capita income of Sindh's rural population has been decreasing to 0.5 annually". The prime reason behind such a menace is the old-fashioned feudalistic approach of local landlords in delaying access to modern-day agricultural techniques. As a result, the per acre income becomes almost next to nil. In addition, the unavailability of water in many districts of the province to cultivate land is also a factor that affects this sector. In the coastal belt of the province, sea intrusion has been playing a lethal role in destroying the agricultural prospect of the region. Thatta, Sujawal and Badin has been prone to such sea intrusions for years. As a consequence, hundreds of acres of productive in these three districts have become totally infertile.

In addition to this mega threat, the lack of access among the rural population to basic facilities such as education, healthcare, safe drinking water and sanitation have made their lives all the more difficult. Under such perilous circumstances, it comes as no surprise that Punjab and KP provinces are comparatively richer than Sindh.

Most of these problems can still be solved by the government. But they require sincere attention and the willingness to act promptly in light of findings mentioned in the World Bank's recent report.

The writer is a freelance contributor and social activist based in Badin, Sindh.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/395023-poverty-and-sindh>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 5TH TO NOVEMBER 11TH 2018  
WAR AGAINST HUNGER  
Editorial November 05, 2018

FOR the first time, the four UN bodies — the FAO, Unicef, WFP and WHO — responsible for helping countries meet their food security goals got together to publish a report on hunger and malnutrition in the Asia-Pacific region. The findings are harrowing. Some 486m people in the region are undernourished. The figures relating to Pakistan are alarming — only 4pc of the country's children are getting a “minimally acceptable diet”. While hunger is on the rise throughout the world, the war against hunger and malnutrition in Asia and the Pacific is particularly difficult to win, given the high population density in the region. The report also mentions the high rates of stunting in the region, as it reasserted the significance of adequate maternal nutrition and the timely introduction of a healthy assortment of food and protein in the diet.

In his victory speech, and then again in his first formal address to the nation, Prime Minister Imran Khan brought up Pakistan's human development challenges as he talked of stunted growth, mentioning that 44pc of all children in the country are stunted, quoting figures from the National Nutrition Survey (2011). Stunted growth occurs when children are poor nourished, fall ill frequently, and have insufficient psychosocial stimulation in the first few years of their upbringing. According to another report by the Ministry of Planning Development and Reform, Pakistan loses \$7.6bn each year due to malnutrition — that's 3pc of the country's total GDP. Like the previous government, the current government has vowed to make Pakistan a ‘zero-hunger’ country by 2030, as listed in the SDGs. Climate change and the frequent occurrences of natural disasters also impact the state of food security and nutrition, particularly in agrarian economies such as ours, affecting the livelihoods and food intake of many. A healthy population will lead to long-term economic prosperity, and human and environmental development. But given the high rates of poverty, the constant political instability, the lack of clear economic policies (so far) and the threats from climate change to agriculture and livelihood, it is not certain if we will see this become a reality in the next 12 years. While it is said that Pakistan, along with other South Asian countries, has witnessed some progress in reducing the number of undernourished, it has not been at the speed and scale desired.

Published in Dawn, November 5th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1443676/war-against-hunger>

#### NINE MORE INFANTS DIE IN DROUGHT-HIT THAR IN A DAY

Hanif Samoon Updated November 05, 2018

MITHI: Nine more infants died from complications caused by malnutrition, waterborne diseases and viral infections in drought-hit Thar towns of Mithi, Kaloi and Nagarparkar on Sunday, raising the death toll to 544 this year so far, according to officials.

Seven of the children died in Mithi Civil Hospital where they were brought for treatment from remote villages of the desert region.

Health officials reiterated the government's line of arguments about unabated deaths of infants and said that most of the children dying in hospitals were underweight, a result of child marriages and lack of birth spacing.

Parents of the victims and those accompanying their ailing children at the hospital complained about lack of healthcare facilities in their villages because of which they had to travel several miles to take their ailing babies to Mithi.

Banks, NGOs, moneylenders warned



Thar SSP Imran Quraishi has warned NGOs, traders and local branches of micro-financing banks to stop recovery of loans from poor Tharis as long as severe drought persists in the desert region.

He said at a press conference at his office on Sunday that lending NGOs and some individuals who dealt in the ugly business of interests had made the lives of poverty-stricken Tharis miserable by first trapping them in the debt and then callously demanding it back despite drought conditions.

Published in Dawn, November 5th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1443619/nine-more-infants-die-in-drought-hit-thar-in-a-day>

#### INFANT MORTALITY: MURTAZA WAHAB DRAWS ATTENTION TOWARDS DEATHS IN K-P

By Our Correspondent

Published: November 7, 2018

KARACHI: Sindh chief minister's adviser on information, law and anti-corruption, Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that those talking about the deaths of children in Tharparkar should also take notice of the deaths of innocent children in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

In KP, during the last six months, over 3,900 innocent children have been killed, he said, adding that 1,720 of the victims were a month-old while 2,259 were infants.

"These numbers aren't the Sindh government's, but are from a report submitted in court," he said. "Till when will Fawad Chaudhry and company remain silent over the deaths of innocent children?" he questioned.

Wahab was referring to a report submitted by the Pakistan Medical Association in the Supreme Court. The report is based on statistics collected from hospitals in K-P.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 7th, 2018

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1842011/1-infant-mortality-murtaza-wahab-draws-attention-towards-deaths-k-p/>

#### JUDGE TO PROBE GOVT INITIATIVES IN DROUGHT-HIT THAR

Nasir Iqbal Updated November 08, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has directed the district judge of Tharparkar to conduct an independent inquiry to ascertain the status of initiatives claimed to be taken by the Sindh government in drought-hit Tharparkar.

The directive was issued by a two-judge bench headed by Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan after Advocate General for Sindh Salman Talibuddin furnished a report highlighting measures taken by the provincial government to mitigate sufferings of the Thar people.

The report was furnished in a suomotu case initiated by the apex court regarding deaths of 400 newborns and infants in Thar due to diseases and malnutrition.

The report says that the Sindh government has declared Tharparkar district and the affected Dehs in seven other districts — Umerkot, Sanghar, Shahdaktot, Dadu, Jamshoro, Badin and Thatta — "calamity affected" areas under the Sindh National Calamities (Prevention and Relief) Act 1958.

But senior counsel Faisal Siddiqui, who represented civil society, said that a number of recommendations by different committees had never been implemented and that the real problem behind the issue was lack of implementation of the proposals about the tragedy in Tharparkar.

Sindh govt report submitted to SC highlights measures to mitigate suffering of affected people

The lawyer said that the real reason behind neonatal or infant deaths was the absence of doctors, paramedics and other staff (at government-run health facilities in the desert area).

The Sindh government's report says that it has also announced a relief package of free distribution of 50kg wheat among all households in the affected areas for three months. The distribution process of free wheat started from September 24 and by the first week of November 172,505 households in Tharparkar have benefited from the relief package.

According to the report, the provincial government has also announced an additional package of ration bags for pregnant and lactating women in compliance with the orders of the apex court, which earlier called for measures to fulfil basic nutritive needs of the affected population.

Besides, the National Institute of Child Health has been tasked with setting up a childcare unit in the Mithi hospital on an urgent basis for attending to emergency and health issues of newborns and infants. The unit is expected to start working soon.

About the availability of water, the report says, 589 reverse osmosis (RO) plants have been installed in Tharparkar, of which 443 are functional. This is sufficient number of RO plants, it insists.

As per the report, the Sindh forest department is in the process of setting up two fodder blocks of 40 acres for livestock in Warwai (Khario Ghulam Shah forest blocks) and Danodhandal (LooniaSamaa forest block) areas of Islamkot and Nagarparkar talukas, respectively. The sub-soil water in these areas is not brackish and small borings having two to three inches delivery capacity and operating on solar system are being installed to grow fodder grasses.

The report says that there is a strong realisation that growth and development in ecologically stressed regions like Thar needs to be handled with care in an inclusive manner by bringing all investments together for creating a pull factor towards a bigger growth node, which will then create a ripple effect in outer regions.

Thar coal and associated power generation holds tremendous promise for the region and for that the local population has to be provided with requisite learning and skills to participate in the opportunities emanating from this resource, it says.

The Sindh government is leading the investments in ensuring participatory development and the Thar Foundation is facilitating action on the ground, the report says also emphasising the need to develop linkages between public and civil society institutions in terms of information sharing, medical services, training, research, innovation and digital transformation.

These linkages can bring in tremendous value for the people given the type of challenges that the terrain and demography of a desert region entail and simultaneously the opportunities that can unfold with cohesive development.

Published in Dawn, November 8th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1444279/judge-to-probe-govt-initiatives-in-drought-hit-thar>

SC FORMS COMMISSION, SEEKS REPORT ON MALNUTRITION, WATER CRISIS IN THAR

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday constituted a commission under district and sessions court judge and sought a detailed report on malnutrition, water and other issues in Thar.

A two-member bench headed by Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah resumed hearing of a case pertaining to infant mortality in Sindh's underprivileged region. Sindh advocate general presented a report outlining measures taken by the provincial government to combat malnutrition and diseases in Thar.

He informed the apex court that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government had offered special incentives to doctor in a bid to encourage them to transfer to Thar. "We have given additional packages worth Rs150,000 to Rs250,000," he said.

The Sindh government's steps, however, failed to sway the top court. "Under which law is the provincial government allotting such huge amount? Is the government releasing a special budget?" inquired Justice Shah.

"Sindh government has issued a notification," informed provincial secretary finance.

The bench sought details of doctors who had accepted and those who had denied positions in Thar. "When an employee refuses to work they are fired," remarked Justice Shah.

The advocate general asserted that extending privileges had changed the situation. When the SC sought a detailed report on the transfer of medical professionals to Thar, the advocate general sought two-three days to submit reply.

The bench also ordered formation of a commission to be headed by district and session courts judge to review malnutrition, water and other issues in the region and submit a report within 15 days.

SC amicus curiae Faisal Siddiqui quipped that the Sindh government has presented five different reports outlining its performance in Thar in the last five years.

Justice Shah recalled that the apex court had constituted a Sindh-government-approved committee in 2016 to review the situation but the team had not delivered results.

The court adjourned hearing till next week.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1842382/1-sc-forms-commission-seeks-report-malnutrition-water-crisis-thar/>

STUNTING IN CHILDREN  
Editorial November 10, 2018

IT seems that there is no end to Pakistan's water-related woes. But while we grapple with issues of water scarcity at a time of extreme climatic events and extreme politicking, water contamination continues to heavily burden the country's health and economy. A recent detailed report by the World Bank confirms the correlation between poor sanitation and stunting in the nation's children. Pakistan has one of the highest rates of stunting in the world. More than half of its under-five population suffers from stunting or wasting. According to the latest National Nutrition Survey figures, the rate of stunting in the country was 44pc — the third highest in the world. Despite making progress in reducing poverty over the past 15 years, despite better access to primary healthcare, despite success in combating other diseases such as polio, and despite a decline in open defecation, the rates of stunting have not declined. The report claims that the major cause is the mishandling of fecal waste due to the lack of proper sewerage systems and open drains across the country. Lab tests reveal high rates of E. coli in ground and surface water, which is believed by

some to permanently damage the small intestines of children, making it difficult for them to absorb the nutrients necessary for growth. Untreated fecal sludge and waste water mix with ground and surface water which finds its way into the irrigation system, while also contaminating the soil.

As urban and semi-urban areas deal with the hazard of open drains, the situation is even worse in the rural areas. It is believed that around 42pc of households in rural Punjab, 60pc in rural KP, and 82 pc in rural Sindh and Balochistan have virtually no drainage systems. There is also the issue of industrial, agricultural and municipal waste being dumped in canals and freshwater sources. With the population having swollen to 207m and expected to increase to 395m by 2047, the demand for clean water and proper sanitation will keep rising. And yet there is inadequate investment in the sector. Currently, water and sanitation come under the same budget. Experts complain that the vast majority of spending goes towards the supply of water, while less than 10pc is allocated for sanitation services. Local administrations need to be involved in overseeing water and sanitation designs, while areas with high rates of stunting and malnutrition must be prioritised for better services.

Published in Dawn, November 10th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1444715/stunting-in-children>

#### SITUATION IN THAR FAST IMPROVING, SAYS CS

A Correspondent November 10, 2018

MITHI: Sindh Chief Secretary Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah has claimed that situation in drought-hit Thar is fast improving and said that remaining reverse osmosis plants will soon be installed in villages to provide clean drinking water to people.

Speaking to this reporter over phone on Friday, Mr Shah said that he had directed officials of the public health engineering department to immediately complete work on waterworks in Thar and operationalise them.

He said that he had asked Mirpurkhas commissioner and Thar deputy commissioner to ensure that all pregnant women and infants were provided quality treatment and given ration bags.

He said the Sindh government had cleared dues of the private firm, which was maintaining RO plants, and asked it to repair faulty plants and pay salaries to its workers to ensure smooth working of the plants and uninterrupted supply of water to Tharis and their livestock.

He said that he had also directed irrigation officials to release water to the only channel supplying water to the desert region. He learnt after his two-day visit of Thar, feedback from media and other sources that clean drinking water was the core issue of the rain-dependent region.

Published in Dawn, November 10th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1444592/situation-in-thar-fast-improving-says-cs>

#### POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVE WITHIN DAYS: IMRAN

Mansoor Malik Updated November 11, 2018

LAHORE: Prime Minister Imran Khan has hinted at launching the first-of-its-kind mega poverty alleviation venture within seven to 10 days to bring people out of abject poverty in the country.

“The poverty alleviation package will be the most important component in the PTI government’s 100-day performance to be unveiled before the people of Pakistan within the next few days,” Mr Khan said.

He said it would be a coordinated effort of all the state organs already working on the project. “All the relevant state organs will work under one umbrella,” he said.

Acknowledging the advice and guidance of China, the prime minister said, “We have learnt from our China visit how they did the historic job of bringing 700 million people out of poverty in just three decades.”

PM opens construction of first shelter home in Lahore, says Pakistan has come out of financial crisis

Laying the foundation stone for the first shelter home Panah Gah near the railway station, the prime minister said it would be the first step towards transforming Pakistan into a welfare state. “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step,” he quoted a Chinese proverb.

Later, the prime minister tweeted: “Today, I laid foundation for first of five shelters for the homeless in Lahore and one in Rawalpindi to be followed by shelters in other cities. We are committed to building a social net for our poor citizens so everyone has a shelter over his/her head and access to health and education.”

Mr Khan said the Panah Gah project would benefit the homeless and needy. The visitors would be offered quality food to be provided by philanthropists. “Such people were never taken care of in previous governments,” he lamented. He said the other shelters would be established at Icchra, Chauburji, Data Darbar and Shahdara.

He said the financial crisis that was looming large in the country did not allow the government to focus on projects like shelter homes in its first two-and-a-half months. “Now, the country is out of the financial crisis as it is in a position to pay off the loan and interest instalments,” he asserted.

Emphasising that the Panah Gah projects will be made centres of excellence, the prime minister said that a board of governors (BoG) would oversee the maintenance and functioning of these centres. “The BoG will finalise the policy for the shelter homes,” he added.

The prime minister said that he would recommend names for the board of governors. He said he had met several such philanthropists and people of high calibre during his two-decade experience of running the Shaukat Khanum cancer hospital.

Acknowledging that Chief Minister Usman Buzdar is a humble person who is well aware of the miseries of the poor, the prime minister said Mr Buzdar picked his point well on establishing the shelters and immediately located five sites in Lahore and started work on the project within no time. He also acknowledged the diligence and passion of LDA Director General Amina Imran Khan in executing the welfare project. Mr Khan said the chief minister’s selection had invited fiery comments and reservations from within the party. He asserted that Mr Buzdar would come out as a star performer like his selected boys in cricket — Wasim Akram and Inzamamul Haq. Looking towards Buzdar sitting on the stage, Mr Khan said, “Another Wasim Akram will emerge from Punjab”.

The prime minister said he had also asked the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister to find locations to establish shelter homes in Peshawar. Similarly, he said, the Sindh governor had also been instructed and the chief minister would be asked to work on establishing shelter homes in Karachi and other big cities in the province.

Answering a question about the government stance on the release of Aasia Bibi, the prime minister said, “A government always stands with Supreme Court decisions to help the country to move forward”. The rule of law depends upon accepting the decisions of the Supreme Court, he added.

The prime minister later chaired a meeting to review the 'Prime Minister's Punjab Initiatives' at the Chief Minister Secretariat.

Mr Khan stressed that the Punjab government should find out some innovative ways of governance.

The meeting discussed proposals to transform the governance system to bring about visible change in people's lives. The Punjab cabinet informed the prime minister about different priorities and targets and their implementation. It also informed the premier about Punjab's 100-day plan and its implementation. The 100 days are completing on Nov 29.

Published in Dawn, November 11th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1444884/poverty-reduction-initiative-within-days-imran>

## 80PC OF PAKISTAN'S POOR LIVE IN RURAL AREAS, SAYS WORLD BANK REPORT

Amin Ahmed Updated November 11, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Rural areas in Pakistan remain much poorer than urban areas and are far more disadvantaged in all respects of service delivery, and the present conditions show the decline in poverty has not reduced the urban-rural gap by much.

According to a World Bank report titled 'State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan', Balochistan has by far the highest rural poverty rate, with more than 62 per cent of its rural population living below the poverty line. However, the gap between rural and urban poverty is the widest in Sindh at almost 30 percentage points. In contrast, the urban-rural gap in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was 13 and 15 percentage points, respectively.

Karachi, Lahore account for almost as many poor people as the 10 poorest districts do

The report said that the poverty head count rate in rural Pakistan was twice as much in urban areas — 36pc versus 18pc — and the gap had remained virtually unchanged since 2001-02. Combined with the slow pace of urbanisation — only about 35pc of the country's population lived in urban areas in 2014 — this gap indicated that 80pc of Pakistan's poor continued to live in rural areas.

Rural households, it said, faced a substantial disadvantage in virtually all aspects of service delivery. Nationally, the rural net enrolment rate was 13 percentage points lower for primary school and 11 percentage points lower for middle school than in urban areas. For girls, these gaps stood at 17 and 14 percentage points, respectively. The rural female literacy rate, at 28pc, was also less than half of that in urban areas.

According to the report, rural children are 8.5 percentage points less likely than urban children to have adequate immunisation by three years of age, and rural women are 10 percentage points less likely to receive prenatal care, 28 percentage points less likely to give birth in a facility or hospital, and 12 percentage points less likely to receive postnatal care. Rural households are also far less likely to have access to key utilities. They are 15 percentage points less likely to have an electricity connection and 63 percentage points less likely to have a natural gas connection than urban households.

The report noted that districts varied widely in poverty, with the richest district Abbottabad at a headcount rate of 5.8pc and the poorest district — Washuk in Balochistan — at 72.5pc. Much of this variation reflected differences in poverty across provinces. The vast majority of the 40 poorest districts were in Balochistan, followed by Sindh.

However, the report added, only three districts each in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa fell in this set, and they were not among the poorest in the group. Not a single district in Balochistan was among the richest 40, and only Karachi and Hyderabad in Sindh fell in this set. The divide between Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab in the north and Sindh and Balochistan in the south was apparent and quite stark.

It also found that districts that include large cities like Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Sialkot, Multan, and Bahawalpur had much greater within-district inequality than other districts.

Taking population into account, a large share of Pakistan's poor lived in well-off districts in Punjab and Sindh, particularly Karachi, Faisalabad, and Lahore, it said.

Karachi, for example, was the third-richest district in Pakistan in 2014-15, but despite its low poverty rate of 8.9pc its large population share meant that 2.5pc of the country's poor lived there. Similarly, Lahore — the sixth-richest city — was home to 2.2pc of Pakistan's poor. Together, these two cities accounted for almost as many poor people as the 10 poorest districts, where poverty rates are six or seven times higher.

Published in Dawn, November 11th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1444874/80pc-of-pakistans-poor-live-in-rural-areas-says-world-bank-report>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 29TH TO NOVEMBER 4TH 2018  
4PC CHILDREN GET 'MINIMALLY ACCEPTABLE DIET' IN PAKISTAN: UN

A

min Ahmed Updated November 03, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Four agencies of the United Nations on Friday warned of a colossal human loss to Asia and the Pacific and their economies if the countries concerned do not recommit themselves to ending all forms of malnutrition and achieving zero hunger by 2030.

The report — Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition, published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the UN Children's Fund (Unicef), World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) — highlights challenges that threaten to undermine the Sustainable Development Goal to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030 (SDG 2).

Nearly half a billion people (486 million) in Asia and Pacific region accounts are undernourished. While recently released global figures indicate an overall rise in the prevalence of hunger worldwide, returning to levels from a decade ago, this regional report points out that stagnation in combating hunger and malnutrition in Asia and the Pacific is also a major concern due to the large numbers of people involved.

Report highlights challenges that threaten to undermine the Sustainable Development Goal to end malnutrition by 2030

South Asia continued to witness some progress in reducing the number of undernourished people, although clearly not sufficient to achieve the zero hunger by 2030. In South Asia, the number of undernourished people declined by less than a million between 2016 and 2017.

Multi-country analysis in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan confirmed the primary importance of both good maternal nutrition and appropriate child feeding practices with timely introduction of diverse complementary foods. But in Pakistan only 4pc of children were getting a “minimally acceptable diet,” report said, citing a government survey.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to more than half of the world’s malnourished children. Malnutrition covers a broad spectrum and affects people of all ages — ranging from severe under-nutrition to overweight and obesity — but children in particular, continue to bear the burden. In this region, 79 million children, or one child in every four below the age of five, suffer from stunting and 34 million children were wasting, 12 million of who suffer from severe acute malnutrition with drastically increased risk of death. While some significant progress has been made towards a reduction of stunting, there has been little improvement in wasting during the past decade.

This is the first time that the four UN agencies responsible for helping countries in Asia and the Pacific achieve food security, improve maternal and child health and welfare, have jointly published such a report. Their joint efforts underline the urgency of the present situation and represent a united front and call to action in urging governments to show greater resolve in meeting previous commitments to end hunger and improve food security and nutrition across the region.

The report’s findings observes: “What is becoming increasingly clear is that the world cannot meet the 2030 target of zero hunger if Asia and the Pacific — the world’s most populous region — is not leading the way. It is a hard reality but one that must be faced with a united determination to turn things around”.

The report concludes with a cautious note of optimism. “Together, we hope that the findings of this report will contribute to a more informed dialogue. Without doubt, all stakeholders must make much greater efforts to accelerate progress toward the goals of a healthy and hunger-free Asia and the Pacific but their action is needed now. The sense of urgency cannot be overstated”.

Asia-Pacific region has witnessed rapid growth in the number of overweight children and the serious consequences that entails for their future health and well-being. An estimated 14.5 million children under the age of five are overweight and virtually all children in the region are increasingly exposed to cheap, unhealthy processed foods high in salt, sugar and fat but poor in essential nutrients. “This double burden of malnutrition sees undernourished and overweight children living in the same communities and households and it can even occur within the same child,” the report said.

Incidences of climate-related disasters have been rising in the region. Natural disasters impact food security and nutrition through reduced food production, which can then cascade down to the entire food value chain, affecting livelihoods and causing economic and agricultural loss. Beyond the short term, disasters can impact the agriculture sector through loss of assets and rural infrastructure, and through increased disease outbreaks. According to recent FAO estimates, Asia suffered a staggering loss of \$48 billion during 2005-2015. Countries need to adapt agriculture to become more resilient to climate related events and to mitigate the damage they can cause.

Published in Dawn, November 3rd, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1443231/4pc-children-get-minimally-acceptable-diet-in-pakistan-un>

#### MALNUTRITION CLAIMS LIVES OF THREE MORE INFANTS IN THAR

THARPARKAR: Infants continue to succumb to malnutrition in Sindh’s drought affected district of Tharparkar, as three more toddlers fall prey at Mithi’s medical facility to this chronic disease on Friday.



The recent fatalities' rise the number of death toll to 540 during last four months of the current year in the area. Thar's situation fails to improve despite relief measures by the PPP government in Sindh to address food shortage in the region.

Earlier this week, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Chairman of PPP stressed the need to address malnutrition in the area. This he stated while meeting party MPA from the area, Arbab Lutfullah, who met him to brief about current situation of Thar.

Last week, the elected representatives of Tharparkar were directed to submit a report on the situation in the drought-stricken district by former President and Co Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari.

Chief minister's special assistant on human rights Dr Khatu Mal met the former president to brief him over current situation of Thar.

On the occasion, Asif Zardari said that the people of Thar will not be left alone in this difficult time and directed the provincial government to ensure all humanly possible efforts to provide relief.

On the other hand, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) recently heard a case related to the drought in Tharparkar at the apex court's Karachi registry.

He issued directives for the authorities concerned to take substantial steps to improve miserable situation in Thar.

CJP Nisar was informed that distribution of wheat is ongoing in the region and special nutrition package is also being provided to address the issue of malnutrition.

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) during the hearing said he will visit Thar himself to inspect the situation in the area, where chronic malnutrition continuing to add to the misery of the people living in drought-hit area.—INP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/11/03/3-page/747593-news.html>

'GOVT IS WORKING TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY'

By APP

Published: November 3, 2018

SUKKUR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sukkur chapter President Mubeen Khan Jatui has said the party is implementing its agenda across the country and corrupt people are scared of PTI's plan to provide relief to the masses. Speaking to a delegation at his residence on Friday, he said that the government is working to alleviate poverty and focusing on improvement of education, healthcare and housing facilities. He added that work on bringing Pakistan at par with developed countries has started.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 3rd, 2018

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1839373/1-govt-working-alleviate-poverty/>

STARVING CHILDREN

By Editorial

Published: November 4, 2018

Next time one is accosted by a minor, who begs for roti and claims to be starving, one should not be skeptical. Given the statistics followed by warnings of four UN agencies, probability dictates that the beggar child is speaking the truth. The Asia and the Pacific Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Food Programme, Unicef and WHO elucidated that in Asia-Pacific region, 25% of children are stunting. The report comes at a time when the five-year-old Yemeni girl, Amal Hussain, who became the face of the famine in Yemen, died of malnutrition. With more than half of the world's malnourished children in the Asia-Pacific region and only 4% of the children receiving a minimally acceptable diet in Pakistan, specifically, this is a living hell for our under-five population.

Although it is a caveat that 14.5 million children are overweight in the region, but that is a separate albeit a related issue. Indeed, food quality has been sacrificed for ready availability and convenience. Processed foods, high dependence on meat and dairy products, and an increase in sugary consumables has led to the overweight epidemic. Ironic as it seems, part of it is owed to the disparities in income between classes. Household income is relevant here. The UN agencies warn that if malnutrition is not curbed by 2030 as set forth by the SDGs, the economies of the regional countries will suffer along with loss of human life. Pakistan is in no position to withstand more blows to its economy.

Culturally, we thrive on hospitality and feeding guests but the excessive food and wastage at events is shameful. We should be embarrassed about inviting hundreds of guests to show off wealth as a sign of social status. While we wait for our government to care, a paradigm shift needs to occur with regard to celebratory events where feeding the food-deprived people gets precedence over wastage of food. This demands a caring and sharing attitude in the real sense.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 4th, 2018.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1840056/6-starving-children/>

## **December 2018**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 24TH TO DECEMBER 30TH 2018***

***MALNUTRITION STUNTING PROVINCE'S GROWTH: SURI***

By Mohammad Zafar

Published: December 24, 2018

QUETTA.: National Assembly Deputy Speaker Qasim Khan Suri has said that malnutrition is one of the major causes of high maternal and child morbidity and mortality rate in Balochistan.

He was speaking at a consultative and sensitisation seminar for parliamentarians and stakeholders organised by the Balochistan Nutrition Programme and provincial Health Department on Sunday.

The deputy speaker said that the federal government under the envisioned policy guidelines of Prime Minister Imran Khan had been taking immediate actions to fight malnourishment and stunted growth.

In the coming days, the National Nutrition Programme would be launched, he announced.

He also said that the centre would support the provincial governments in its efforts to eradicate diseases, especially among children and women.

Speaking on the occasion, Balochistan Health Minister Mir Naseebullah Marri announced the establishment of a provincial nutrition directorate, unifying all nutrition emergency services under one umbrella.

In the wake of ongoing drought conditions, the provincial cabinet had endorsed scaling up of the nutrition programme on an urgent basis, he added. He said the provincial government had been busy in providing nutrition-related interventions.

Marri stressed the importance of the federal government and development partners' support in making such interventions successful.

He lamented the high rate of malnutrition among children below the age of five.

Quoting National Nutrition Survey 2011 figures, he said 40 per cent of children were underweight, 52 per cent stunted, 16 per cent wasted, while 61 per cent had Vitamin A deficiency (maternal), 74 per cent Vitamin A deficiency (child), 49 per cent anemia (maternal) and 57 per cent with anemia (child).

Meanwhile, Nutrition Programme National Manager Dr Baseer Khan Achakzai said that after the 18th Constitutional Amendment the provincial government had been tasked with working on conducive and conclusive policies in the health sector.

He appreciated the government of Balochistan for taking malnutrition as a health problem.

Health Secretary Hafiz Abdul Majid said creation of a supportive environment for the implementation of comprehensive food and nutrition policies was crucial.

The health department will extend its support in establishing a nutrition directorate to stimulate development policies and programmes, he added.

Majid stressed the need for working under the multi-sectoral approach.

Adviser to Chief Minister on Secondary Education Haji Mohammad Khan Lehri, MPAs Bushra Rind, Malik Naseer Shahwani, Zeenat Shahwani, Mir Sikandar Umrani, Mobeen Khilji and former Balochistan Assembly speaker Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani also attended the event.

In the wake of high rate of malnutrition in Balochistan, the provincial government has declared a nutrition emergency. As the devastating burden of malnutrition has lifelong negative consequences, including stunted growth and impaired cognitive development, experts warn that it can permanently disable a child's potential to become a productive adult.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1873315/1-malnutrition-stunting-provinces-growth-suri/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 17TH TO DECEMBER 3RD 2018

GOVT INDIFFERENT TO RISING SUICIDE TREND IN DROUGHT-HIT THAR

Imran Ayub Updated December 17, 2018

KARACHI: Amid poverty, malnutrition and a growing health crisis, Tharparkar has witnessed a new but quite frightening and disturbing trend over the past few months in its towns where the number of suicides has increased to an alarming level in 2018, sending ripples in the ranks of community development experts and activists who found more social and domestic reasons than poverty for the increasing phenomenon in the desert region.

Data compiled by the Sindh police suggests that the number of suicides in the Mirpurkhas range, in which Tharparkar district also falls, has gone up this year, even much higher than Karachi which has no match with the poverty stricken part of the province in terms of population, culture, civic issues and the crime rate.

“The number of suicides in Tharparkar reached to 43 by mid-November,” said a police official citing the record of the suicides in Sindh districts. “It’s quite high considering the past trend. One should remember that it’s only the number which was registered by the police. There are number of families or relatives of the deceased who do not come to police or report the incident.”

Forty-three people have committed suicide during the current year

On an average, he said, there were four cases of suicide reported to the police during around 11 months of the year from the thinly populated region. In some case, young mothers ended their lives and of their children, he added.

Experts back data but see different reasons

Activists and people involved with community development for decades in the desert region also recognise that the number of suicides had increased in Tharparkar district. But, some of them have a different take on its reasons.

“It’s quite strange I believe,” write and activist Jami Chandio said, while agreeing that the number of suicides had increased in view of reports he had received from towns in Tharparkar. “But, I think poverty is not an issue. One cannot say anything with authority and this phenomenon needs to be investigated but apparently there are a few reasons which can help understand the current socio-economic issues in Thar.”

He said fast changing lifestyles and addition of new habits in routines of Tharis had been making their lives more difficult.

Mr Chandio, who is also associated with the Centre for Peace and Civil Society think tank, believed that the government’s concentration had increased in Thar areas over the past few years due to frequent media coverage and political pressure but a “holistic planning” needed to meet challenges in the region ranging.

Dr Sonu Khangrani, a community development expert and the recipient of a presidential award who had history of social and welfare campaigning in the desert region, saw some key reasons behind the trend.

“There is a couple of quite unfortunate but true factors that have emerged over the past few years in Thar towns and I believe that has played a key role in giving a push to the suicide trend,” he said. “We [previously] have seen that the people of Thar despite facing poverty and tough life did not adopt some bad habits [use of tobacco or drugs]. But over the years, addiction has quite spread in Thar towns with growing psychological problems. These two factors along with poverty have resulted in the situation.”

He regretted that the government, despite involving in so many projects and business organisations that had increased their influence and concentration in the districts for financial gains, had so far ignored the situation.

The worst thing was that they did not even realise the gravity of the situation, Dr Khangrani said.

Published in Dawn, December 17th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1451792/govt-indifferent-to-rising-suicide-trend-in-drought-hit-thar>

FOUR MORE CHILDREN DIE OF MALNUTRITION IN THARPARKAR  
RECORDER REPORT | DEC 19TH, 2018 | THAR

The malnutrition and epidemics continue to claim move lives and four more children fall prey to starvation and diseases on Tuesday. The health department sources said that four among children who were under treatment at Civil

Hospital Mithi expired. The recent death in have taken the toll during December 2018, to 30 while 576 since January 01, 2018.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/12/20181219432512/>

MAJORITY OF BALOCHISTAN DISTRICTS FACING DROUGHT-LIKE SITUATION: MINISTER  
Saleem Shahid December 20, 2018

QUETTA: At least 20 of the 33 districts of Balochistan are facing drought where over 100,000 families and 1.7 million livestock have been affected so far.

Provincial Home Minister Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa disclosed this while speaking at a press conference along with provincial minister Asadullah Baloch and adviser to the chief minister on livestock Metha Khan Kakar after attending a high-level meeting on Wednesday.

The meeting was presided over by Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani to review reports sent by deputy commissioners of various districts on drought.

During the meeting, several decisions were taken to overcome the situation in 20 districts of the province.

The home minister said the provincial government had announced a special package of Rs500m for rehabilitation and providing relief to the people of drought-stricken districts of Balochistan.

Khosa says 100,000 families have already been affected

He said that according to the data collected so far, 109,339 families and 1,756,578 livestock had been affected in 20 districts, including Turbat, Panjgur, Chagai, Rakhshan, Gwadar, Pishin, Qila Saifullah, Qila Abdullah and Zhob.

Official sources told Dawn that the United Nations had conducted a survey after receiving information about the long drought and declared 14 districts of Balochistan as the worst-hit areas.

The sources said that the UN agency had informed the government that it would arrange \$50m for providing assistance and relief to the victims.

At the press conference, the ministers said that it was decided during the meeting that the government would take all possible efforts for the rehabilitation of over seven million people who were facing after-effects of the drought.

They said that deputy commissioners of others districts had been asked to conduct surveys as well and send reports as soon possible.

“The provincial government has decided to approach international donors and relief organisations to seek their help in this regard,” Mr Khosa said, adding that the federal government would also be approached for financial assistance.

He said that free medical camps and dispensaries would be set up for providing medical facilities to the affected families and treatment of livestock in the drought-hit areas.

Replying to a question, Mr Baloch said that the government package per affected family would be decided according to their needs, but initially the package would be between Rs25,000 and 30,000 per family.

## DROUGHT IN 20 DISTRICTS HITS 100,000 FAMILIES

By Mohammad Zafar

Published: December 20, 2018

QUETTA : Home Minister Mir Saleem Khosa on Wednesday said more than 100,000 families and over a million livestock had been affected in 20 drought-hit districts of Balochistan but the provincial government was taking solid measures to mitigate the drought effects and providing essential supplies to the stricken families.

He said this during a press conference at Chief Minister Secretariat. Provincial Minister Asad Baloch and Adviser to CM Mitha Khan were also present.

The minister, who also heads the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), said around 109,339 families and 1,756,578 heads of cattle were affected in 20 districts of the province following the recent drought.

Balochistan chief minister has released a special package of Rs500 million for drought-stricken areas, he said, adding that the United Nations teams were busy in the survey of affected areas. Moreover, he said the provincial government would pursue Centre for assistance in tackling this crisis.

Khosa said: "As many as 109,339 families and 1,756,578 livestock animals were affected during the long-lingering drought in Balochistan. But taking immediate action on alarming situation Balochistan chief minister has imposed health emergency in all affected regions and released package of Rs500 million".

He highlighted that the province is deprived of rain for many years, which allowed drought to grip many parts of the province. The government cannot fight with nature, he added.

The government of Balochistan has been making earnest efforts to provide relief in the drought-hit areas of the province, Khosa said, adding that during a meeting to review the situation in drought-hit areas, chaired by Balochistan CM, various decisions were taken regarding relief operations in the 20 districts of the province.

"The environmental and health experts of United Nations are busy in doing the survey of 14 districts of Balochistan under the grip of drought while provincial government has been establishing free medical camps and dispensaries in these districts," said Khosa.

He also said the disaster management committee comprising officials of various departments would be established that would do short-term, mid-term and long-term planning.

To a query regarding deputy commissioners' drought assessment report, Khosa said the government has received 20 reports and waiting for further reports after which under available resources the provincial government would commence relief operations.

Answering another query on provincial government's package, provincial Minister Asad Baloch said keeping in view the need of affected families, the government was making arrangements to provide a full package but initially, the package would be of up to Rs25 to Rs30 thousand per family.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1870634/1-drought-20-districts-hits-100000-families/>

FRAMEWORK INKED WITH UN TO END POVERTY, ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY

Amin Ahmed December 21, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations have signed a new five-year Country Programming Framework [CPF] covering the 2018-22 period that will focus on three priority areas of zero-hunger, climate-smart resilient agriculture and inclusive and efficient agriculture and food systems.

The new framework is aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Pakistan and the government priority areas as defined in the Vision-2025.

Minister for National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan and FAO representative in Pakistan Mina Dowlatchahi signed the framework at a ceremony on Thursday.

Mr Sultan said that Pakistan-FAO collaboration had positive history and the UN agency had been supporting food security and agriculture and “we are moving towards achieving greater goals”.

Programme aligned to sustainable development goals

Speaking on the occasion, Mina Dowlatchahi said that CPF would mark another five years with Pakistan and “we are here to serve for the betterment of the people of Pakistan and we take into account the matters like climate and value chain. We are aligned to sustainable development goals”.

Dowlatchahi was hopeful that the implementation of CPF would contribute to the achievement of no poverty, zero hunger, food security and improved nutrition, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land and partnership for the goals.

The FAO will support the implementation of the first national food security policy approved early this year; multi-sectoral nutrition strategy, twelfth five years plan on nutrition and development and implementation of provincial agriculture policies; food safety policy; drought management and mitigation policies.

Under the framework, the FAO will support the development of model ‘Climate Smart Agriculture’ villages which will be further up scaled throughout Pakistan.

Parallel to this, the FAO will also take into account capacity development of government departments, family farmers and livestock keepers in climate resilient agriculture and smart water practices.

To streamline social protection systems, the FAO will initiate and strengthen risk transfer mechanisms, including crop and livestock insurance schemes and access to financial institutions, on district and provincial levels.

Since most of the arable land in Pakistan is already cultivated, productivity gains are achieved through increased cropping intensity and the higher use of fertilisers, in the next four years, the FAO will raise the awareness and promote the use of Right Fertiliser at the Right rate at the Right time (4R) concept and manure, to improve soil management as an integral element of sustainable agriculture growth strategies.

As part of the CPF implementation, the FAO will support creation of rural employment opportunities, private sector engagement and entrepreneurship opportunities in agri-business development.

The UN agency will also support the development and dissemination of different knowledge products such as food security and nutrition information system and strengthen the capacity of federal and provincial government officials, family farmers, market actors to utilise national and provincial agriculture, water and food information systems.

## ACUTE MALNUTRITION CASES FOUND IN BALOCHISTAN

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent December 22, 2018

QUETTA: An alarming rate of acute malnutrition was found among children, aged between six months and five years, in Quetta, Pishin and Qila Abdullah districts during a four-day mass screening that concluded here, it emerged on Friday.

The screening revealed more than 40 per cent rate of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in some communities in the three districts, while the GAM rates ranged between 40pc and 65pc in some villages in Panjpai union council area.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO) standards, GAM rate of 15pc constitutes an emergency. GAM is the combination of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM).

The mass screening for malnutrition provided vital information and data that will guide focused planning and response interventions by the government and partners to address this situation at the community and grassroots levels.

From preliminary results in the Quetta block, the health department in collaboration with Unicef and other partners started response interventions that included treatment of all identified malnutrition cases. The children identified as SAM are being given treatment through lady health workers and supervisors against the backdrop of Nutrition Emergency in Balochistan.

The mass screening exercise will commence shortly in other districts of Balochistan through active involvement of basic health unit, lady health workers and volunteers from the same communities.

Published in Dawn, December 22nd, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1452913/acute-malnutrition-cases-found-in-balochistan>

## LACIP ORGANISES FIRST MEETING OF DDF RECORDER REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has offered the district government and administration of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to jointly plan, finance and execute large infrastructure projects to maximize benefits for local stakeholders. In this regard, the Livelihood Support and Promotion of Small Community Infrastructure Programme (LACIP) organised the first meeting of District Development Forum (DDF) on Friday.

The forum aims to conduct periodic and systematic follow-up and monitoring of projects that are being implemented by Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund through LACIP. Second phase of LACIP, with the total outlay of Euro 10 million from Germany through KfW is implementing the project. The objective is to improve general living conditions in the districts, through a reduction in vulnerabilities to disasters, improvement in quality of life and better income generating opportunities. The programme has particular focus on inclusion of women and the destitute and disabled members of the communities. DDF was established by the provincial government of KP in 2014 as a result of efforts by PPAF, to ensure development funding for communities by donors is not duplicated.

The meeting was attended by the elected Nazims of the district, tehsil and village councils, Assistant Commissioner of Tehsil Daggar, representatives of local government departments, KfW, NRSP, PPAF and NEC consultants.

Shafiullah Khan, Deputy Commissioner, Buner chaired the meeting along with Dr. Ubaidullah Khan, District Nazim, Buner. Two assistance commissioners, 14 officials from village councils, 4 district councillors and District Nazims



were also in attendance. Shaukat Ali, Coordinator Governance, KfW, Muhammad Nadeem, Sr. General Manager, PPAF, Saeed Raza, Regional Program Officer, NRSP and Azher Uddin NEC/KfW Consultant were also present on the occasion.

Muhammad Nadeem, Sr. General Manager, PPAF offered the district government and administration to jointly plan, finance and execute large infrastructure projects so that benefits could be maximised for local stakeholders.

Shafiullah Khan, Deputy Commissioner, Buner expressed his gratitude to KfW and PPAF for allocating substantial funds for socio-economic development of district Buner.

He assured the support of local government and administration for smooth execution of projects in the respective villages.

The district administration and government will carry out development activities related to poverty alleviation and building social capital in selected union councils of the district.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/22/17-page/755174-news.html>

#### UPLIFTING POOR FROM POVERTY IMPERATIVE'

President lauds Christian community for its dam donations

ISLAMABAD President Dr Arif Alvi Friday said the idea of Naya Pakistan could not be materialized without uplifting the poor regardless of their faiths.

Addressing a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr in connection with the Christmas and New Year celebrations on Friday, he said "Pakistan is heading towards a destination where people from all faiths show empathy towards one another in hours of distress."

The event was hosted by Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and attended by first lady Samina Alvi, Religious Affairs Minister Noorul Haq Qadri, cabinet members, diplomats, parliamentarians, Bishop of Peshawar Humphrey Sarfaraz Peters and large number of people from Christian and other faiths.

He also spoke high of the services rendered by Church for humanitarian causes across the world including Pakistan and cited German born Dr Ruth Pfau, who dedicated her life for treatment of leprosy patients in Pakistan.

He also cited the August 11, 1947 address of Quaide-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah who had promised religious and personal freedom to the people,

He also thanked the Christian community for donation to support the construction of Diamer Bhasha and Mohmand Dams.

On the occasion, the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Noorul Haq Qadri said the ministry was planning to hold an international interfaith conference where the Pope or his representative, Imam-e-Kaaba and chief of Egypt's Al-Azhar University would be invited.

He shared that the ministry was also finalizing the legislation for formulation of interfaith harmony policy. App

[https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI\\_ID=11201812220025&EN\\_ID=11201812220007&EMID=11201812220006](https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201812220025&EN_ID=11201812220007&EMID=11201812220006)

Published: December 10, 2018

HYDERABAD: In a district blessed with huge deposits of oil and gas, 53% of children suffer malnutrition, according to the official figures. A meeting of the district administration and the health officials in Sanghar district on Friday was informed about the alarming situation as the percentage is higher than even the province's 48%.

"This signifies a very dangerous situation," said additional deputy commissioner Subhash Chandar. He said that under the Sindh government's health Sindh initiative, a campaign will be launched in Sanghar to provide food supplements to such children.

Shaukat Ali Sathio, monitoring officer of Accelerated Action Plan for Reduction of Malnutrition, informed that the programme is being launched in nine districts of Sindh where there is higher incidence of undernourishment. Education, health, population, local government, agriculture, livestock and other relevant government departments are also being engaged in the exercise.

"The programme aims to reduce the percentage of malnutrition from 48% to 30% in a span of four years," he told.

According to Sathio, the deputy commissioners in each of the nine districts will be assigned the responsibility of coordination besides the role of monitoring the campaigns.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 10th, 2018.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1863530/1-children-suffer-malnutrition-sanghar/>

## LIVES OF THE POOR

Noman Ahmed December 11, 2018

THE past few weeks in Karachi have seen an anti-encroachment drive that has affected livelihoods and living. Those spearheading the drive justify their actions, saying they are legal, and those using the spaces are painted as land grabbers. Meanwhile, another cause for concern is the intended clearing of land along the route of the moribund Karachi Circular Railways.

The underprivileged in Karachi require a comprehensive plan so that they can have a legal right to exist and operate, with the city benefiting from their services.

The foremost issue is land for housing. About half a century ago, land was distributed by city authorities to various categories of urban dwellers according to their need. Land use was determined on the basis of individual and collective social requirements. Today, land is acquired through clout, capital and clandestine coercion of the institutions concerned.

The poor cannot acquire land through purchase or force as they possess neither surplus capital nor political influence. The state institutions have a responsibility to ensure the poor can access the land market. Existing legal instruments such as the fair implementation of Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (SKAA) Act, 1987, is an option.

Karachi's poor must have the legal right to live and operate.

This law was promulgated during the tenure of prime minister Mohammad Khan Junejo. The objective of the law was to regularise those squatter settlements which had come up and evolved till March 1985 (revised to June 1997), that

existed in ecologically safe locations, had acquired the approval of the land-owning agency/ department concerned, and comprised over 40 households. By implementing the law, more than 300 squatter settlements were regularised. The past few years have seen the work of regularisation slowing down due administrative reasons.

As migrations to the city have continued unabated, survey and subsequent regularisation of squatter settlements must be undertaken along scientific lines. With advanced digital mapping tools available, the exercise can be done with greater accuracy.

In the absence of an institutionalised option of accessing shelter, Karachi's poor developed settlements on left-over and marginal land. An elitist view of such neighbourhoods — referred to as katchi abadis — is that they are breeding grounds and safe havens for criminals and the inhabitants are not deserving of social interaction with the rest. In other words, katchi abadis are looked upon with contempt and as an eyesore. They are viewed as a part of the problem, not the solution.

In fact, katchi abadis are not built with criminal intent, isolated cases notwithstanding. They emerge from unusual sites as there are no alternative locations. When the residents of settlements along the KCR were interviewed recently, they said as much.

The right to run hawker stalls, small- to medium-sized shops and other services also require serious review. The poor do not have the means to purchase or rent shops and commercial spaces that are formally available. But their services and merchandise are needed in shopping areas, transport terminals, business districts, railway stations and traffic junctions.

In many parts of the world, open public spaces are made available to hawkers according to land-utilisation plans. These plans demarcate the limits and conditions within which vending activity is allowed. In India, the Street Vendors Act, 2014, is an important legislative tool that regulates this activity in urban areas. A town-vending committee, with representatives of street hawkers, is constituted to oversee the management of vending activity. Matters relating to space adjustments, vending licences and extortion and bribery are dealt with by the committee. Similar laws and provisions exist in the UK, the US and many other countries.

Sindh can consider introducing an amendment in the existing local government laws to make provisions for vending activity to exist on formal and legal grounds. The affectees of various anti-encroachment operations should be documented and accommodated in formally created places to save them from financial destruction.

The provincial government and KMC must identify locations for setting up temporary bazaars to facilitate vendors and retailers in areas where a greater number of shops and stalls have been razed. The design and construction of stalls should ensure both functionality and aesthetics. Women entrepreneurs and sales staff must be encouraged. The same support should be extended to the disabled.

Image lifting and communication is another strategy that can help in scaling up the operations of such bazaars. Innovative ads and campaigns can be designed to boost commercial potential. Introduction of banking kiosks and provision of credit card facility can enhance the performance of bazaars. Similarly bazaars can also become tools for stretching target subsidies in underprivileged localities.

The writer is chairman, Department of Architecture & Planning, NED University, Karachi.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1450764/lives-of-the-poor>

BALUCHISTAN MPAS ASK GOVT TO HELP DROUGHT-HIT PEOPLE

QUETTA: Opposition and treasury benches expressed concern on Saturday over growing drought in parts of Balochistan and said that just sending a few trucks of relief goods by Provincial Disaster Management Authority [PDMA] would not resolve the problem and special measures were needed to help the people hit by the calamity.

When the house met for the first winter session, members complained that the government was not taking them into confidence over the drought situation in the province.

Taking part in the debate on the drought situation, BNP's Sanaulah Baloch referred to a resolution adopted by the house in the last session on the issue, but regretted that no serious steps had been taken by the government so far.

Relief goods sent by PDMA termed inadequate

He said the province was facing terrorist attacks, cases of kidnapping for ransom and other serious problems, but the government was only interested in holding Jeep rallies.

He said that a few trucks of relief goods had been sent to drought-hit areas and in his own constituency only six trucks reached, but the aid was not enough even for 50 families.

He said that in the resolution adopted by the house, members had demanded of the government to take immediate steps for overcoming drought and to form a committee, but nothing had been done.

Mr Baloch also spoke on the issue of missing persons, kidnapping of a senior doctor and demands of media people.

Mr Asghar Khan Achakzai of ANP also spoke about the drought and demanded of the government to take immediate steps to resolve the matter.

On the issue of teachers' protest and their demand for educational allowance, Mr Achakzai said that teachers of schools and colleges were holding protest rally outside the assembly building and the government must resolve this important issue on priority basis.

Advocate Malik Sikandar of JUI-F said the government should review educational act approved by the cabinet for legislation. Through the act, he said, the government wanted to bring education department into essential services act and ban trade union activities of teachers' organisations.

He said that education did not come into essential services and asked the government not to commit injustice with teachers by denying them the right to protest or form trade unions to defend their rights.

The house was also to discuss the Auditor General's report of 2017-18 about the provincial government's expenditure, but was adjourned due to the death of PkMAP Senator Sardar Azam Khan Musakhail in Karachi.

Published in Dawn, December 16th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1451669/balochistan-mpas-ask-govt-to-help-drought-hit-people>

DROUGHT VICTIMS IN THARPARKAR BISP, WFP INITIATE PROGRAMME TO ALLEVIATE FOOD INSECURITY  
RECORDER REPORT

HYDERABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the United Nations World Food Programme, Pakistan (WFP) supported by Australian Government, have launched an initiative Saturday to alleviate the food insecurity and associated vulnerabilities of 428,400 drought victims in Tharparkar district of Sindh Province.

Federal Secretary BISP Omar Hamid Khan was addressing to a launching ceremony at Banzir Cultural Complex Mithi. He further said that this initiative will provide humanitarian cash transfers to address household food deficits that have arisen as a result of failed crops and reduced productivity of livestock. The intervention is part of the on-going efforts to strengthen the shock-responsive capacities of BISP, Pakistan's largest safety net.

As an immediate food consumption support, WFP will supplement BISP's unconditional cash transfers with a humanitarian top-up of PKR 1,000 each for eligible households. A total of 63,000 poorest of poor families in Tharparkar will receive a humanitarian top-up alongside BISP's UCT programme's routine monthly cash-transfer of RS 1650/- Secretary BISP Omar Hamid Khan, termed the partnership as "Highly valued", to address the growing issue of stunted growth and malnutrition in Pakistan, and also emphasized the initiative's alignment with Federal Government priority list.

BISP and WFP will maintain close coordination with the local authorities to ensure that the local markets remain responsive to the needs of affected populations and the injection of additional cash does not result in an unprecedented surge in the prices of food and other essential items in the locale.

Speaking on the occasion, WFP Country Director Finbarr Curran and Representative in Pakistan reiterated his support to assist the most vulnerable communities in the country. 'Cash-based humanitarian response is one of the most cost-effective means of assisting disaster-affected populations, especially when local markets are responsive. As the largest safety net in the country, BISP presents an excellent platform to empower people to manage their household food and non-food consumption in the times of emergencies. WFP remains committed to strengthen BISP's capacities to anticipate and respond to such situations in a timely and effective manner' he said. He also thanked to the Government of Australia for supporting WFP and Government of Pakistan to respond to emergencies and reaching the most vulnerable populations during and after the emergencies.

"Drought can have devastating consequences for communities particularly those struggling with poverty. The Australian Government supports the Sustainable Development Goal 2 – Zero Hunger, and is proud to assist the Government of Sindh in its efforts," said the Deputy Head of Mission, Australian High Commission Brek Batley and Head of Nutrition, country office WFP.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/12/16/3-page/754137-news.html>

**PM MAY SET UP POVERTY ALLEVIATION UNIT AT HIS OFFICE**

By Shahbaz Rana

Published: December 16, 2018

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan may set up a poverty alleviation unit at his office, to be headed by a special assistant, for implementing a new broad-based strategy to pull millions of people out of poverty.

About 16 government and semi-government organisations will liaison with the office of special assistant on poverty alleviation and social protection, said sources in the PM Office.

Dr Ashfaque Hasan Khan, a member of the Economic Advisory Council, is likely to be appointed as the special assistant to implement this strategy.

Imran has already approved the strategy and now a summary will be sent for seeking approval of the federal cabinet to establish the unit at the PM Office, stated the sources.

The new institutional arrangement is being considered after the proposal to set up the Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Authority by merging all the existing government organisations turned out to be unfeasible due to legal obstacles, according to people privy to the developments.

The authority could not be set up because organisations like the Employees Old Age Benefits Institution, Workers Welfare Fund and Benazir Income Support Programme were working under various laws of parliament.

In the new setup, organisations like the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund and Pakistan Baitul Mal will also report to the special assistant.

The idea to set up the council on poverty has also been rejected as it is not acceptable to all the stakeholders, according to the sources. A summary in this regard was prepared by the Ministry of Planning and Development, which was opposed by a handful of stakeholders.

The new strategy on poverty is a replica of the Chinese strategy that helped lift 700 million people out of poverty. The government aims to move away from the cash disbursement strategy to a 'differentiated strategy'.

The proposed strategy is also focused on ending the monopoly of existing players who have turned the task of poverty alleviation into a profitable business for themselves. Less than half a dozen people, sitting at some key organisations, have minted huge amounts of money over the past two decades. These well-entrenched people may try to create obstacles in the way of executing the new strategy.

The government will also face some genuine problems because under the constitution some of the subject matters fall within the jurisdiction of provinces. But in three provinces, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is in power.

The new strategy will also target people living in rural areas through intervention in the agriculture sector. The new office will do district-wise mapping of poor people.

The poverty unit will also coordinate to improve the skill sets for technical education, increase employment opportunities, enhance access to financial assistance for promotion of small-sized businesses and provide inexpensive accommodation, social protection and Sehat Insaf Card.

Officially, the poverty level in Pakistan declined to 24.3% in 2015-16, according to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2017-18 released in April this year. In absolute terms, 50.4 million are recognised as poor.

Over the last decade, Pakistan's poverty headcount has declined persistently both at national and regional levels, it added.

But independent reports, which use different methodology, paint a bleak picture. According to the latest World Bank report titled 'State of Water Supply, Sanitation and Poverty in Pakistan', Balochistan has by far the highest rural poverty rate, with more than 62% of its rural population living below the poverty line.

According to the multidimensional poverty index of the United Nations, half of the country's population lives in poverty and lack access to basic needs of education and health. A majority of the rural population (54.6%) lives in acute poverty.

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 3RD TO DECEMBER 9TH 2018

THE RURAL FACE OF POVERTY

Dr Abdur Rehman Cheema Updated December 03, 2018

GLOBALLY, the geography of poverty has a rural face. Of around 1.4 billion poor worldwide, 70 per cent reside in rural areas of developing countries. Rural development and transformation, therefore, remain central to the goal of poverty reduction enunciated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Pakistan is no exception with its 9.3pc urban poor compared to 54.6pc in rural areas. The majority of this mass is youth as shown by the Sindh Union Council Community Economic Strengthening Support Programme (Success) conducted in eight districts of the province. This programme also collects and shares disaggregated data. Here are some insights about the characteristics of the rural youth.

Mainstream youth initiatives, such as Prime Minister Youth Programme, offering business loans, laptops, fee reimbursement and training opportunities assume basic literacy and skills. Thus, they are biased towards urban youth. Although necessary, such programmes are unlikely to help reduce extreme poverty and the urban-rural divide.

Mainstream youth initiatives and schemes offering business loans and laptops assume basic literacy and skills that have a deep urban bias

The National Human Development Report 2017 highlighted the significance of engaging with youth and forwarded some generic suggestions. The insight gained about the characteristics of the rural youth from the analysis of the poverty scorecard survey data in Sindh calls for customised rural-centric youth policy initiatives due to an excessive gap of knowledge, skills and capacities compared to their urban counterparts.

Here are some of the startling findings about the youth (ages between 15 and 29) in the eight districts covered under Success.

Of the total population of 47.89 million in Sindh, 22.97m (47.96pc) live in rural areas as per the latest census. The eight programme districts namely Dadu, Jamshoro, Larkana, Matiari, Kambar Shahdad Kot, Sujawal, Tando Allahyar and Tando Muhammad Khan have a rural population of 5.69m, according to the poverty scorecard survey undertaken in the Success programme in 2016.

The findings show that one-fourth of the total rural population in the said districts is young (735,499 males and 691,126 females). However, a larger group of future-youngsters (ages between one and 14) comprises 45pc of the total. It means 70.9pc (4.04m) people are below 29 years of age as per the poverty scorecard survey. In all the eight districts, over 50pc people live in rural areas. Amongst the eight districts, Sujawal is mostly rural with 89pc of the people in rural areas while Larkana is the least rural with 53.97pc rural population.

At the national level, up to 30pc of youth is not literate as per the National Human Development Report (2017). The scorecard survey results show that 68.14pc of the rural youth is illiterate. Only 7.42pc and 6.34pc of them have attained education till matric and intermediate levels, respectively. Furthermore, youth with bachelor's and master's degrees or above are only 1.96pc and 0.51pc, respectively.

The analysis also shows huge gender discrimination where females' education attainment is far less than that of males. For instance, the male-female ratio is 62/38 until grade five, 71-29 in grades six to eight, 75-25 in matric, 79-21 intermediate, 79-21 in bachelor's and 75-25 in master's or above.

Disparity exists within the districts as well with Sujawal having the least literate youth (16pc) and Larkana the highest (41pc).

Though young, 35pc of the males and 53pc of the females are married in the programme area. As we know, land ownership is skewed in Sindh. Landlessness is positively correlated with illiteracy in our data. The illiterate landless rural youth is 70pc compared to 59pc belonging to families who own land.

What are these young people doing? The scorecard survey results show that 40.9pc of rural youth are engaged in household chores (97pc of them are females). Likewise, 26.1pc work as off-farm unskilled labour (94pc are males). The third highest ranked occupation (8pc) is 'student'. Despite living in rural areas, only 7pc are involved in farm labour or work as tenants.

Do we expect these young people in rural areas to seek jobs and claim their share in national youth programmes? At least half of them would not be able to do it even if they wished so because 46pc do not have CNICs.

The writer is lead researcher at the Rural Support Programmes Network, Islamabad

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, December 3rd, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1448968/the-rural-face-of-poverty>

#### SEVEN MORE INFANTS DIE IN DROUGHT-HIT THAR

A Correspondent December 04, 2018

MITHI: Seven more infants died from complications caused by malnutrition and waterborne diseases in Mithi Civil Hospital over the past two days, raising the death toll to 595 this year so far.

The parents who had brought their children from remote villages of the drought-hit desert district told journalists that continued consumption of contaminated water and malnutrition were the main causes behind unabated deaths of children in Thar.

They said that they were forced to drink the highly contaminated water of wells because they had no other source to get water from.

Health and nutrition experts have urged government functionaries to make long-term plans and policies to avoid deaths of infants and expecting mothers in Thar.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1449198/seven-more-infants-die-in-drought-hit-thar>

#### LG MINISTER UNVEILS PLAN TO IMPROVE CIVIC CONDITIONS IN THARPARKAR

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter December 05, 2018

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Saeed Ghani has said that a model village with essential facilities has been set up in Tharparkar with a view to plan provision of such facilities to this backward region.

“This model village comprising 500 households has been provided safe drinking water, drainage and sanitation facilities, fish ponds, an upgraded hospital working round the clock, and two educational institutions — one primary



and the other secondary school,” he said after his meeting with M.B. Dharejo, the director general of the Rural Development Authority (RDA), on Tuesday.

Mr Dharejo called on the minister in his office to brief him about the ongoing schemes which are aimed at improving civic facilities in Tharparkar.

Mr Ghani told the media that people had already started living in the model village. “On the pattern of this model village, we are working on upgrading other villages of Tharparkar. We will bring about an improvement in water quality and supply, sanitation and other facilities. Kitchen garden also features in the plan,” the minister said.

He said that fish pond and kitchen garden would help government provide food to villagers and address the issue of protein deficiency in the local population.

The minister said that safe drinking water would be supplied to the villages through reverse osmosis (RO) plants as well as lined channels. Separate ponds for their livestock would also be developed, he added.

Under a scheme, he said, 105 villages would be supplied water through RO plants to be linked with the lining, which involved 1,200 kilometres of waterways.

Speaking to Dawn, Saeed Ghani said that the government’s top priority was to put all 589 RO plants installed in Tharparkar into operation.

RDA Director General M.B. Dharejo said that 468 out of the 589 RO plants were functional and the remaining ones would also be made functional by the end of the current month. Besides, he added, 245 more plants were being installed in the district and put into operation by Jan 15, 2019.

In reply to a question, the LG minister said that the PC-1 for the installation of 10,000 solar lights in the province had been prepared and many of the sites were in Tharparkar. “Hippo roller” was being introduced in villages of Tharparkar and Dadu where women had to walk long distances with water-filled earthen pots on their heads. The hippo roller will help ease their labour as it could be pushed easily to move from one place to the other, he said.

Furthermore, the minister said, solar-powered mosquito killer appliance would also be introduced to help people of the areas lacking electricity save themselves from malaria and dengue virus.

He said he would visit Tharparkar, Dadu and certain other districts to inspect water schemes, RO plants’ sites and other installations and to review the pace of work.

Published in Dawn, December 5th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1449445/lg-minister-unveils-plan-to-improve-civic-conditions-in-tharparkar>

## RS82BN PLAN LAUNCHED TO REDUCE RURAL POVERTY

Amin Ahmed Updated December 06, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) on Wednesday unveiled Rs82 billion plan for the agriculture sector, with the aim of enhanced crop yield, improved water efficiency, livestock and fisheries development, and creation of agro-markets with the overall objective of uplifting small farmers and reducing rural poverty.

The transformative plan – based on recommendations made to Prime Minister Imran Khan by MNFSR Task Force – follows the ‘100 Days Agenda’ and is part of the Rs200 billion package for the agriculture sector by the federal and provincial governments.

In a press conference, Minister for National Food Security and Research Sahibzada Mehbub Sultan briefed about the comprehensive plan which will be implemented within two to three years.

Listing targets, the minister said that all goals are achievable and every effort will be made by the ministry in this regard.

In the area of crop yield, the minister said that an investment of Rs4 billion will be made through promoting mechanisation. Fifty per cent subsidy will be given to small farmers on the purchase of crops specific machinery; development of high-yielding varieties, and improved provision of certified seeds.

International experts will be engaged to set up new facilities and upgrade existing modern research institute while extension services at all level, agronomy, plant protection, marketing and crop processing methods will be reorganised in order to gain better production with less input.

The minister directed the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) to produce better seeds for the farmers. In this regard, the prime minister has sanctioned Rs4bn for the PARC.

For the development of fisheries sector, the plan envisages promoting shrimp farming, cage fish culture and trout farming in northern areas. Costing Rs8.6bn, the project will be extended to coastal areas, he said. A cage farming project is already working at the Head Panjnad, he said.

Water efficiency will be improved under the Rs68.60bn National Programme for Improvement of Watercourses in Pakistan Phase-II. The project is aimed at water course lining, enhancing command area of small and mini dams in barani areas and water conservation in barani areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As a result, 9 million acre feet (MAF) of water will be saved and made available for irrigation.

The ministry says about 47MAF of water is lost in conveyance in canals, distributaries and watercourses.

The minister announced that laser levelling will be provided to small farmers on subsidised prices. The government will arrange 12,000 new lasers over the next two to three years. In Sindh, there are 18,000 lasers while in Punjab the total number of lasers is 12,000, he said.

The prime minister has approved the Livestock Initiative Project for small and medium farmers. Under this, the Buffalo Calf Fattening Programme, Backyard Poultry Programme, and Small and Medium Dairy Farms will be promoted.

A mega Foot-And-Mouth Disease Project will be launched with the help of UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) at a cost of Rs763 million.

“UAE and China are major markets for Pakistan’s cattle but to explore exports. The project will help ensure that animals in affected areas are disease free within one year. Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalnagar and Bahawalpur would soon be declared disease free zones,” the minister said.

The Backyard Poultry Programme will be launched in 36 districts of the country. It aims to reduce stunting and improve nutrition value as well as reduce poverty at local level. In Punjab a similar programme is already underway.

The government will develop six markets in collaboration with the private sector to facilitate consumers in purchasing agricultural produce. A state-of-the-art market is being developed in Lahore that will be replicated in other five locations, he said.

Responding to a question about the current sugarcane crisis, the minister said the issue will be resolved in a couple of days.

Published in Dawn, December 6th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1449747/rs82bn-plan-launched-to-reduce-rural-poverty>

#### FUNDS FOR DISPLACED THARI FAMILIES' MONTHLY STIPEND APPROVED

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter December 09, 2018

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday approved Rs950 million grant which would be invested for reasonable returns with a view to arrange for Rs10,000 monthly stipend to each of the families displaced or affected due to land acquisition for Thar coal project's block-II.

Mr Shah told the Thar Foundation to invest the grant and start paying the stipend to the families.

The decision was taken at a meeting presided over by him at the CM House to review water supply and rehabilitation schemes of Tharparkar district. It was attended by Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh, Planning and Development chairman Mohammad Waseem, Irrigation Secretary Jamal Mustafa Syed, CM's principal secretary Sajid Abro, Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) chairman Khursheed Jamali and others.

The chief minister said that around 1,200 families, displaced due to the land acquisition, would be given Rs10,000 each in financial assistance in addition to a house within the township being constructed for them. Each of the houses would have all basic facilities, including kitchen, washroom, corridor, veranda and courtyard. At least two persons of each family would be provided jobs, he added.

The CM expressed his confidence that Thar would become one of the most prosperous regions of the world. He said that similar social uplift schemes would be designed for the residents of any other blocks if they would have to be moved out of their villages.

He noted that the Thar coalfield is spread over an area of 9,000sq-km and comprises 12 such blocks. Imtiaz Shaikh informed the meeting that construction of 60 houses was completed and work on the others was under way for the families' resettlement.

#### Water supply plan

The meeting also discussed the Rs9.9bn Thar coal waterworks project being executed to supply water from RD 360 Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) to the Vajhiar reservoir for further supply to the coalfield of block-II which would be used for power generation.

The chief minister noted the effluent discharge from sugar mills was destroying LBOD water, which would be used for power generation. He constituted a committee headed by the energy minister with the task of meeting sugar mills' managements and make them establish their own effluent treatment plants to stop the effluent discharge into the drain. He asked the minister to submit a report to him within the next 15 days.

Mr Shah said if effluent discharge into the drain was stopped, this would bring down the waterworks project's cost from Rs9.9bn to Rs4bn. The meeting also observed that Sukkur Barrage had completed its life, which was being extended by another 30 years through major repairs and overhauling. It said a new barrage would have to be built.

#### River channelisation

At a separate meeting, CM Shah directed the P&D and irrigation departments to prepare a feasibility of "new Sukkur Barrage" and channelisation of River Indus between Guddu and Sukkur barrages.

MNA Syed Khursheed Shah and water expert Idrees Rajput attended the meeting along with Imtiaz Shaikh, Syed Nasir Shah, irrigation adviser Ashfaq Memon and others.

The CM said the concept of channelising Indus water would help reduce water losses, control waterlogging and salinity and protect the area from dyke breaches.

The meeting was informed that the distance between the two barrages was 180km and width of the riverbed was between 12km and 20km. The construction of new bunds (embankments) would reduce the width of riverbed and create more than 500,000 acres of new land for cultivation. A concrete channel would also reduce water losses which had been estimated at five to eight per cent.

The participants said instead of channelising the whole belt of the river some portions might be lined to keep the cost at the lower side. The channelisation could be done in those areas where breaches had been occurring off and on, he said.

The meeting noted that China had expertise in channelising rivers and canals and, as such, the feasibility could better be undertaken by them.

The chief minister said that the study for a new barrage had already been conducted. He asked the P&D chairman to make necessary arrangements for preparing a feasibility report.

Published in Dawn, December 9th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1450303/funds-for-displaced-thari-families-monthly-stipend-approved>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 26TH TO DECEMBER 2ND 2018

HEALTH MINISTER DECLARES NUTRITION EMERGENCY IN BALOCHISTAN

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent Updated November 26, 2018

QUETTA: Provincial Health Minister Mir Naseebullah Marri has declared nutrition emergency in Balochistan and said the provincial government planned to expand its campaign for combating malnutrition, being conducted in seven districts, to other parts of the province.

He expressed these views while talking to the media after an annual progress review meeting of the Balochistan Nutrition Programme for Mothers and Children (BNPMC).

He praised BNPMC manager Dr Amin Khan Mandokhail for his dedication to serving the poor.

He said the Balochistan government might work in collaboration with the federal government, UN agencies and NGOs to address malnutrition among the lower strata of society.

Highlighting the severity of the problem, Mr Marri said the challenge facing the province was enormous, adding that under the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the Balochistan government would make all its possible efforts to resolve the issue of malnutrition and stunting.

However, he said, technical and financial support was needed from the Centre, as well as development partners.

Fight against malnutrition and disease affecting the health of mothers and children was his government's motto, he added.

The progress review meeting was attended by Director General of Health Services Dr Shakir Ali Baloch, BNPMC provincial coordinator Dr Amin Khan Mandokhail, representatives of Unicef and WHO and relevant stakeholders.

The participants regretted that 2011 Balochistan figures portrayed a dismal picture in which 40 per cent of children under five years are underweight, 52pc stunted, 61pc have Vitamin-A deficiency (maternal) and 74pc Vitamin-A deficiency (child), 49pc Anemia (maternal) and 57pc Anemia (child). They said that the recent wave of drought and water unavailability had increased the ratio of poverty disparity in the far-flung areas of the province where majority of population was food insecure.

It is critical to expand and improve the nutritional status of children under five years and that of pregnant and lactating women by improving the coverage of effective nutrition interventions with a priority focus on malnourished among the poor and other disadvantaged, including women, nutritionally vulnerable groups, ethnic and religious minorities, and socially marginalised occupational and settler groups in all districts of Balochistan.

Published in Dawn, November 26th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1447706/health-minister-declares-nutrition-emergency-in-balochistan>

## NUTRITION EMERGENCY

By Editorial Published: November 27, 2018

The saying that money does not buy happiness may ring true superficially, but when it comes to wellbeing and low stress as sources of happiness, money certainly plays a role. In a drastic update from the Balochistan government, Health Minister Mir Naseebullah Marri labelled the province's plight in child and maternal health as experiencing a nutrition emergency. Exactly what parameters constitute an emergency are less definitive but there is enough reason for the minister to do so after an annual meeting with the Balochistan Nutrition Programme for Mothers and Children (BNPMC). The root cause is concluded to be poverty and this is unsurprising for Balochistan noting that it is the poorest province of the country, according to a report by the UNDP. Assuaging malnutrition in the province will require strategic liaising with the employment and development sectors.

Stunted growth as a result of malnutrition has been an epidemic that health professionals continue to struggle with. While poverty is to blame, regressive mentalities with regard to women in the workplace also put families at risk. It ignores the advantage that added income could give to the household to be food secure, instead wanting to waste a woman's talents.

In a state of malnutrition emergency, a coordinated effort is required between departments. It is obvious that food assistance programmes such as those popular for feeding the destitute and homeless wanderers during Ramazan or otherwise are not long-term solutions. Furthermore, if people regularly expect they can secure free meals either through free food programmes or begging, they will not learn to provide for themselves to be self-sufficient. Thus, during this time of emergency, food assistance programmes such as the BNPMC are practical to move away from a state of emergency and save lives by targeting nutritional deficiencies, but long-term solutions are crucial to tackle the root cause of poverty.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 27th, 2018.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1854795/6-nutrition-emergency/>

**THARIS TOLD TO CONTROL THEIR OWN POPULATION TO WARD OFF IMPACT OF DROUGHT**  
Hanif Samoon Updated November 28, 2018

MITHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Gyanchand, MNA Dr Mahesh Kumar Malani and MPA Fakeer Mohammed Bilalani from Tharparkar on Tuesday urged Tharis to help themselves by controlling their own population in order to meet the challenge of food and water scarcity in the region.

Speaking at a gathering organised by the population welfare department in the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Cultural Complex in Mithi, the lawmakers, other local party leaders and officials of the department shared their views with local people on increasing population of the region, drastically deficient in basic amenities. They said early marriages and tendency of having more and more children were the main causes of the deficiency.

They advised Tharis to go for population planning, using contraceptives and avoid early marriages.

A result-oriented massive awareness campaign was essentially required to be launched to control Thar's population, they stressed. MNA Malani observed it was very unfortunate that the population welfare department could cover only 42 per cent of the targeted area in disseminating awareness and providing products to families with the aim of controlling births.

Recruitment of an adequate number of workers was needed to achieve the goal, he said.

Although the provincial government's step to enact the law against early marriages was appreciable, "we have a long way to go to guide people about the modern methods of controlling the birth rate in Thar," said Dr Malani.

He urged the local government workers, NGO activists, religious scholars, teachers and other people to play their role in saving the future generation of Thar from drought and climate change impacts.

Senator Gyanchand, who also heads PPP's Thar chapter, was of the view that proper education and guidance to Tharis could help achieve desired results in efforts towards birth control and child marriage prevention.

MPA Bilalani urged officials of the departments concerned to launch massive awareness drive in Thar in this regard and also to address the mess caused by multiple factors.

Population welfare department's technical adviser Dr Talib Lashari said he would take up recommendations of the lawmakers and other stakeholders with the higher authorities so that a strategy could be devised to effectively control population growth in the Thar region.

Published in Dawn, November 28th, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1448018/tharis-told-to-control-their-own-population-to-ward-off-impact-of-drought>

**TWO MORE CHILDREN DIE OF MALNUTRITION IN THARPARKAR**  
RECORDER REPORT | NOV 30TH, 2018 | THARPARKAR

The death toll of children due to malnutrition in Sindh's Tharparkar region continues to climb as two more passed away on Thursday. According to Sindh health department, the deaths took place at Civil Hospital Mithhi where two minor children fall prey to malnutrition taking toll during the month of November to 53.

The recent deaths of two children take the death toll in Tharparkar since January 01, 2018 to 564. According to the health department, every year 1,500 children die due to malnutrition, infections and lack of proper medical facilities in the remote region.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/11/20181130427485/>

## ECC APPROVES \$83M GRANT FOR BISP BENEFICIARIES

Khaleeq Kiani Updated December 01, 2018

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Friday decided to gift 40,000 tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan and allowed about \$83 million international grant to Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) to pull thousands of poor people out of poverty.

The meeting presided over by Finance Minister Asad Umar approved a proposal of Ministry of National Food Security and Research for provision of 40,000 tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan as a gift.

The ECC also approved a proposal for provision of \$82.6m funds as grant to PPAF for disbursement to 320,000 beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme to help them graduate out of poverty.

A gift of 40,000 tonnes of wheat also approved for Afghanistan

The meeting was informed that the government had provided unconditional cash transfer (UCT) to BISP beneficiaries since its inception in 2008-09 and had so far disbursed a total of Rs618 billion to around 5.7m beneficiaries.

A proposal was floated during the tenure of the previous government to gradually graduate these beneficiaries out of poverty which announced various budgetary initiatives, including 'BISP Beneficiary Graduation Programme' in the 2017-18 federal budget.

Under the programme, selected beneficiaries of BISP would be provided with entrepreneurial training, along with one-time cash grant of Rs50,000 to start their own business and become productive members of the society and discontinue receiving Rs5,000 UCT grant.

In this regard, PPAF devised the "National Poverty Graduation Programme" (NPGP).

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) had agreed to provide a loan amounting to \$82.6m to the Government of Pakistan (GoP) for NPGP on highly concessional rates, free of interest with 0.75pc per annum service charges and a maturity period of 40 years, including 10 years as grace period.

The Economic Affairs Division has already signed Project Financing Agreement with IFAD on November 14, 2017.

As per agreement, the government shall make available the loan proceeds as grant to the poverty fund.

Moreover, the government through the PPAF shall provide \$5m as counterpart financing for the programme from the already deployed 'Prime Minister's Interest Free Loan Scheme'.

Successful implementation of the programme is expected not only improve the livelihoods, and income generation capacity of the 320,000 poor households, but to also reduce the liability of the government from paying the UCT of Rs6bn per year to these BISP beneficiaries.

As per the terms of agreement with IFAD, the government is required to relend the 'loan' proceeds received from IFAD to the PPAF as a 'grant', in relaxation of the re-lending policy of the government that normally charged 12-14pc interest rate.

The ECC, therefore, approved relaxation in the relending policy for provision of \$82.6m as grant to PPAF for BISP beneficiaries under the NPGP.

Published in Dawn, December 1st, 2018

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1448744/ecc-approves-83m-grant-for-bisp-beneficiaries>

**WEAKER GENERATION: 45% CHILDREN ARE ANAEMIC IN K-P**

By Our Correspondent

Published: December 2, 2018

**PESHAWAR:** Health report shows that 68 per cent children are facing Vitamin A deficiency, 47 per cent are anaemic and 16 per cent are underweight in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Health Secretary Dr Farooq Jameel said this while addressing inaugural session of the three-day seminar of Pakistan Medical Association "Plight of nutrition in K-P" in local hotel on Saturday.

The health secretary has said that in today's world billions of people are suffering malnutrition which affects the standard of living. Due to malnutrition, women face complication in pregnancy and deliveries while mental health of children also suffers.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 2nd, 2018.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1858444/1-weaker-generation-45-children-anaemic-k-p/>