



# SDGs Watch

PARLIAMENTARY PURSUIT FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

## NEWSLETTER

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### SDGs-1 NO POVERTY

SDGs Watch  
PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

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## From the desk of **Mr. Asad Qaiser** Honourable Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan



It is a matter of utmost honor for Pakistan being the first country in the world to have established a Parliamentary Task Force on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2014. Since then the Parliament of Pakistan has continued to perform its role towards the international development commitments and pursued for required legislation. The SDGs Secretariat has been pro-active in technical assistance to strengthen the role of Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs.

A nation can only prosper when its people have a suitable standard of living and opportunities to become a positive contributor to the economy. Aiming to achieve this, Pakistan adopted SDGs as 'Pakistan's Development Goals'. We are using

these goals as a roadmap to ensure a better life for all through solving problems relating to health, nutrition, education, poverty, gender inequality, climate change and more.

The Parliament and Government of Pakistan are working together to set an example for other countries. We have taken necessary steps including the presentation of the Voluntary National Review in order to showcase our success story at the High Level Political Forum in 2019, in New York, USA. We have carried out a data-gap analysis and set SDGs priorities accordingly. Simultaneously, we are in the process of launching the National Assembly Strategic Plan 2019-2023, that identifies contours of our road map towards institutional reform and strengthening.

As the patron of the parliamentary SDGs Task Force, I assure that the Parliament of Pakistan will do what is necessary for the achievement of targets by 2030. Within this parliamentary system, lies a means of outreach and oversight, that is imperative for the efficient functioning of the Government. With a range of priorities being spearheaded, it is vital that they be provided with the correct legislative guidance and support.

It is such determination and commitment to the Agenda 2030 that allows the Parliamentary SDGs Secretariat to stand apart from other Caucuses. I would hope that it continues to do so in the years that follow and prove to be an example to the parliamentary system of government that this democracy is committed to see flourish.

## From the desk of **Mr. Riaz Fatyana**

### Honourable Convener, National Parliamentary Taskforce on Sustainable Development Goals

Pakistan has wholly endorsed the UN Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals and aims to be on rise amongst other successful countries. The priorities of the current Task Force are in line with the SDGs targets and are earnestly working to be on the right track. Pakistan takes great pride in its first around the world, state of the art Parliamentary secretariat on SDGs, actively engaged to promote SDGs related business in the House.

Over the years, the percentage of poverty in Pakistan has only decreased but we still have a long way to go. Addressing poverty is the main focus of the incumbent Parliament and has categorised it as high

priority. Hence, this issue of the SDGs newsletter covers multiple issue-areas intersecting with Goal 1: No Poverty. It is a matter of utmost honor that Pakistan will be hosting an Inter-Parliamentary (IPU) Regional Seminar on SDGs for Asia Pacific in March 2020 in Islamabad - majorly highlighting Goal 1 – No Poverty. The aim behind the Seminar is to invite the regional and global Parliaments and exchange ideas on international best practices.

During the current quarter, I, along with our two Task Force Members successfully presented our Voluntary National Review at the High Level Political Forum in July 2019, New York. Ending poverty is one of

the priority goals which were discussed at the

Voluntary National Review.

SDGs are meant to address the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people. In a diverse country like Pakistan, we believe achieving Goal 1 would easily lead us to synthesise all the other 16 Goals. No doubt, it is an uphill work but we need to join hands, take up this agenda and work in harmony towards achieving the National SDGs priorities.





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## District-wise data scorecards for informed Parliamentary oversight on SDGs

The strategic intent of the Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs is to develop district-wise, comparable data scorecards for each priority SDGs target. This includes health, education, youth and others. The scorecards will serve as a tool to monitor the overall developmental framework of Pakistan.

The scorecards will provide Parliamentarians and provincial assembly members with a detailed development profile of their constituency in relation to SDGs, enabling them to formulate and push for effective and informed legislation and oversight.

To achieve this great milestone, we are building partnerships with the Ministry of Planning, development and reforms, research organizations, UN bodies and other stakeholders in the development sector. Together we plan to utilize resources effectively and generate comprehensive data scorecards for 273 constituencies of Pakistan.

Launched at UN Summit in New York on 25-27 September 2015, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), will guide the development discourse over the coming 15 years. It aspires to ensure prosperity and well-being for all people, while protecting our planet.

In February 2016 the National Assembly of Pakistan had passed a unanimous resolution to adopt the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as the national development

agenda. The Speaker of the National Assembly constituted Parliamentary Task Forces at federal and provincial levels to oversee and support legislation for the SDGs and assigned the SDG Secretariat to provide support. Henceforth, the SDGs National Taskforce was constituted, striving to ensure cascading their commitment on SDGs, given its ambit of enhancing planning, implementation, monitoring and accountability of interventions in development through legislation and resource allocation as well as through representation, oversight and parliamentary scrutiny of the work of the executive; promoting democratic norms, people centred governance.

### The SDGs Scorecard:

Availability of data and information is crucial for policy decision making and therefore, the need to ensure the strengthening the data, research and documentation capacity of parliament. The Parliamentary SDG Scorecard, therefore, aims to establishment an online tool of linkages and bring together various available data sets to provide requisite data and analysis to parliamentarians as and when needed, preferably at the constituency level. This will not necessarily collect its own data but using and bringing together various datasets and information. Following are the four key features of the scorecard:

1. The scorecard will be a **one window information solution on SDGs** for parliamentarians. It will provide information and analysis for an independent assessment and verification of progress. The scorecard

will provide at-a-glance information using multiple data sources available but cumbersome, large and often complex databases, hence simplifying access to data and information in a holistic manner.

2. Harnessing the power of data so **no constituency left behind**. The scorecard, to the extent possible will identify inequalities and track progress at the constituency level, to ensure the goals are be met at district/constituency level.
3. Since monitoring alone will not help make progress, an important aspect of this will be a **mechanism to receive feedback** directly from the sub-national level (MPAs and local government) and citizens that they represent, on progress, challenges and proposed solutions to existing problems, both on and off-line. This feedback mechanism can also include ways of parliamentarians providing feedback to citizens on actions being taken in parliament and the outcomes of those actions
4. The scorecard will allow parliamentarians to **engage in on-going monitoring and follow-up of SDGs implementation** as well as periodic review of progress. This tool will also be used to collaborate with existing parliamentary structures such as Oversight committees, public Accounts committees etc. as well as monitoring and reporting structures both within and outside of government.





“The government needs to be reminded that providing jobs for everyone remains one of the most ancient and effective ways to reduce poverty in Pakistan and nurture a stable, harmonious society. Developing the economy would also help fund current anti-poverty programs via taxes on the wealth created.”

Article by

SDGs Watch  
**MNA Riaz Fatyana**

Convener, National Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs





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## WHY ALLEVIATING POVERTY IS AN UTMOST PRIORITY?

"Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings."

(Nelson Mandela)

### WHAT IS POVERTY?

Poverty refers to the state of a person who lacks a usual or acceptable amount of money or possessions. Poverty is a multifaceted concept, which may include social, economic, and political elements. Absolute poverty is the complete lack of the means necessary to meet basic personal needs, such as food, clothing and shelter. On the other hand, relative poverty occurs when a person cannot meet a minimum level of living standards, compared to others in the same time and place. Poverty ranges from lack of economic development to flaws in redistribution of a country's wealth to us vs. them mentality. Effects of poverty are very harmful for both individuals and societies.

### WHY POVERTY NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED?

Poverty is the baseline issue that leads to plenty of social as well as economic problems, ranging from increase in crime rate to fall in economic growth of a country. Poverty means households do not have a proper, nutritious diet and clean drinking water. This leads to diseases and infections. This, in turn,

reduces the ability of the people to work and earn for their families. Which ultimately leads them to opt for unlawful means of earning money to run their household, which then increases the crime rate. In addition to this, due to no awareness, these people have a lot of children who they are unable to provide the necessities of life to and because of financial restraints, they are also unable to afford medicine for their sick elders, so the number of dependents increases. With little to no income, the living standards of these households fall even further and they are unable to feed, clothe or educate their children. The overall literacy rate of the economy falls, depriving the nation of a competitive and well-educated work force. This leads to a decrease in human capital, which is the stock of knowledge, habits, social and personality attributes (including creativity) embodied in the ability to perform labour so to produce economic value, and technological knowledge, which is the society's understanding of the best ways to produce goods and services. With a decrease in human capital and technological knowledge of the country, productivity, which is the quantity of goods and services produced from each unit of labour input, as well as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is a monetary measure of the market value of all the final goods and services produced in a period, decreases. A decrease in the GDP means our nation is moving backwards instead of forwards. This is an ongoing cycle, starting from

children growing up in poverty, to being significantly disadvantaged in educational skills, to struggling for a good job and then on failing to find one, is unable to educate his children. This cycle has kept generations of families in poverty. Some of these poor families attribute their poverty with their pace and make their peace with it, while others who aspire to rise from the bottom settle for some unlawful ways to earn money and fulfil their wishes. Poverty has negative effects on peace and prosperity of a country along with its economic development and stability, hence the issue needs to be addressed and effective solutions implemented to lessen the devastating effects of poverty on the growth of a country. Pakistan is a poor and under developed country. Most of its population lives in entirely adverse circumstances. Although the number of people living below the poverty line has decreased by 26% in the last ten years, hunger and unemployment affect a large section of population. Several factors contribute to these worsening conditions of poverty in Pakistan.

Two fundamental questions are:

- (i) what approach has Pakistan used to alleviate poverty, and
- (ii) Since poverty is still high in Pakistan, why have the approaches or policies not worked for poverty alleviation?

### CHALLENGES BEING FACED BY PAKISTAN IN ALLEVIATING POVERTY

A state like Pakistan with its roots



buried deep in conservatism, various challenges arise in accomplishing the task to eradicate poverty. The main challenge faced by the government is the population followed by a high illiteracy rate. Population in Pakistan is growing very, very fast. And providing jobs, housing and education for everyone isn't an easy task. In the last 10 years, the population in Pakistan has grown by 40 million, making it the 6th largest country in the world with about 180 million inhabitants. According to recent estimates (2008), poverty in Pakistan - by national standards - concerns less than 20% of the population. However, after hitting this record low level, poverty is on the rise again, estimated somewhere between 30-40% depending on the source (government, World Bank). Efforts to fight poverty have been on-going since the 1970s, despite the "poverty bomb" of the 1990s due to corruption and poor government strategies that caused an increase in the number of poor. The rising population has made it difficult for the state to implement its anti-poverty policies. The population increase has led to a steeper rift among the urban and rural population. It also results in the lack of investment in technology, as most GDP is used to feed and accommodate the growing population. Another major factor that hinders the way forward in eliminating poverty is the conservative nature of the

people of Pakistan. Due to their backward ideas, poor people instead of sending their children to schools send them to work. Although the state has provided cheaper education incentives in the form of government schools yet the need of these people comes before the future of their children, this marks the beginning of the cycle of never-ending poverty. Many Pakistani scholars focus on the lack of productivity and low literacy levels of the domestic workforce to explain poverty in Pakistan. As of 2006, only 50% of the population was literate and government spending on education was still only half of the average of many other developing countries (2% versus 3-4%). However, 3-4 years later, improvements led literacy levels to climb up to 60% of the population. The problem remains the inequality behind this number: nearly 70% of men are literate but only 45% of women are. And Pakistani women are deprived of their right to education on the basis of some backward ideas. These ideas and conventions need to be suppressed before trying to eliminate poverty, but since these are deeply ingrained in the thinking of almost every Pakistani that it is becoming a problem in the process of eradication of poverty.

## THE POVERTY TRAP RIGHT HAND CYCLE

Another problem that looms large is that the government's health expenditure is one of the lowest in the world. Therefore, it seems that the causes of poverty in Pakistan lie more in a massive health crisis at the moment, more than a productivity issue - although important too. Moreover, people's attachment with good old habits that die very hard has led to the reduced revenue than could be expected. For instance, farmers prefer traditional agriculture and grow

crops in the right season when they could use fertilizers to improve their yield and grow crops all the year using greenhouse farming methods. Although, policy gaps, deteriorating law and order situation, lack of effective targeting, high population growth and weak governance has been a hurdle in reducing poverty in Pakistan yet efforts were made in the past and are still being made to improve the condition.

## ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

Pakistan has from time to time launched anti-poverty or pro-poor programmes and policies (under varying nomenclatures) to reduce substantially the incidence and severity of poverty. Some of these programmes have been in existence even before independence. Most such initiatives started as state sponsored and funded programmes, often with substantial support from foreign donors. The primary reason for state intervention in reducing poverty was the perception that the market mechanism by itself was insufficient to lift the poor from the abject level of poverty experienced by a high proportion of population. The political and economic environment for undertaking poverty alleviation measures in the early 1990s called for increased reliance on market forces and the building and strengthening of social safety nets largely with the involvement of NGOs. Both the donors and the government found it expedient to undertake poverty alleviation programmes through the involvement of local communities, rather than through bureaucratic mechanisms, as in the past, even though some of the state-funded programmes such as the Village-AID Programme of the 1950s and 1960s, had made considerable impact in involving local community in development. The programme was centred largely on building rural





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infrastructures such as roads, bridges, canals as a means of spreading modernisation in the rural areas. However, while a large number of poverty alleviation projects were launched by the government since the 1990s, such as the Rural Support Programme, Microcredit programme, Women Empowerment programme, aimed at alleviation of poverty, there is no comprehensive study evaluating the overall impact on the reduction in the incidence of poverty. Much of the explanations on the activities of these programmes are hidden in the Annual Reports of the NGOs involved in them but academics and researchers have not paid adequate attention to them. Concurrently, there was a change in the dispensation of poverty alleviation funds by the international financial institutions and the IMF renamed the economic and structural adjustment facility (ESAF) under which Pakistan had earlier negotiated a loan, as the Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Strategy (PRGS). Under their flagship poverty assistance programme, the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), the IMF and the World Bank, made poverty reduction and growth the lynchpin of its lending to low income countries for almost a decade since September, 1999. After the introduction of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) by the IMF and the World Bank, a number of steps were undertaken by the government of Pakistan to conduct the research on poverty reduction through the establishment of the Centre for Research on Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution (CRPID) in the Planning Commission.

The GoP's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is the principal official framework and strategy for this task and is operationally linked to Pakistan's commitments under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The four pillars of the PRSP are:

1. Accelerating economic growth while maintaining macroeconomic stability;

2. Improving governance;
3. Investing in human capital;
4. Targeting the poor and the vulnerable. Under the PRSP, the existing social safety net programmes were strengthened and streamlined. The main programmes that existed under social assistance were Zakat, or cash transfer funded from a religious levy, Baitul Maal (BM), tax funded cash transfer, Tawana Pakistan (TP), or healthy Pakistan—a school feeding programme for girl students, and a non-targeted wheat price subsidy. Under social insurance, the main programmes were the Employees Old Age Benefit (EOBI), the Workers' Welfare Fund (WWF), and the Employees' Social Security Institution (ESSI), all of which were funded using payroll levies on employers. The PRSP included a very wide range of supposedly public expenditures as poverty-reducing expenditure without any analysis of the impact of those expenditures on diverse sectors such as infrastructure construction, education, including higher education, and law and order—which largely benefited the non-poor and affluent classes.

## WAYS TO EFFECTIVELY TACKLE POVERTY

The problem with the way most governments fight poverty is they don't realize that a lot of people go back and forth between poverty and precariousness (i.e. chronic poverty). Some years are (slightly) better than others, some are terrible. These people are the hardest to target and yet they represent millions of people who aren't included in the estimations of poverty in Pakistan. It's important that the government runs specific programs aimed at helping these people (well, first identifying them) and finding the right solutions for them. Among policies that prove most useful, social transfers to educate these families' children are most effective in both short-

and long-term. It prevents parents from sending their kids to work when they need help and a very small amount (\$1 per month) can make a huge difference in alleviating poverty. When combined with training for parents, who can then understand the value of education, this type of anti-poverty program can make a big difference. Peace is good for business, everybody knows that. But economic stability – in particular inflation – is also key for everyone to dare start new businesses and trust that things will turn out good. In the long-run, inflation is central to alleviate poverty in Pakistan and the country can't do without a stable economy. Investing in the right sectors then comes as the next priority. Recent research has shown that the modernization and development of agriculture in Pakistan has lifted millions out of poverty. But many factors also influence this success: climate, geography (e.g. remote villages), human capital (e.g. education) and the presence of infrastructure. Big countries like Pakistan with huge workforce need to focus on developing sectors that employ millions of people (known as labour intensive industries), such as agriculture and manufacturing. And Pakistan has the resources to turn into a producer of high value-added goods, but for that it needs to liberalize its trade rules to make it easier to both manufacture at home and export goods. This would help the country gradually reduce its dependence on humanitarian aid. The government needs to be reminded that providing jobs for everyone remains one of the most ancient and effective ways to reduce poverty in Pakistan and nurture a stable, harmonious society. Developing the economy would also help fund current anti-poverty programs via taxes on the wealth created.



“A good yardstick of people’s wellbeing in a country is to see if they can attain at least a subsistence level of living for themselves and their families. Those who are unable to do so fall into poverty. Given the importance of reducing the incidence of poverty around the globe, the first Goal among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to have No Poverty by 2030.”

Article by **SDG 1– No Poverty: Snapshot of Pakistan**  
**MNA Dr. Aisha Ghaus Pasha**  
Former Provincial Minister for Finance – Punjab





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A good yardstick of people's wellbeing in a country is to see if they can attain at least a subsistence level of living for themselves and their families. Those who are unable to do so fall into poverty. Given the importance of reducing the incidence of poverty around the globe, the first Goal among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to have No Poverty by 2030.

### What are the targets of SDG1?

The targets accepted by the global community regarding poverty alleviation are six, principal being, first, eradication of extreme poverty (measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day). Second, reduction of incidence of national poverty by half, and third, significant mobilisation of resources for pro-poor programs (measured as proportion of resources allocated to education, health and social protection). Besides, the target involves commitment to implement an effective social protection system, equal rights and access to economic resources and social services and resilience of the poor to climate changes, extreme events and economic, social and environmental shocks.

### What is the profile of poverty in Pakistan?

Data is last available for year 2015, which is also the first year of the SDGs. According to the Planning Commission and UNDP database, 38 percent of Pakistanis lived in poverty as measured by the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). This number declined from 55.2 percent in 2004-05. Therefore, while poverty is high, fortunately it is on the decline in Pakistan. There is substantial variation across regions, lowest poverty is in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 24.9 percent, followed by Punjab, 31.4 percent, Sindh, 43.1 percent and K-Pk, 49.2 percent. Highest poverty is in Balochistan, 71.2 percent. FATA region (now a part of K-PK) surpassed Baluchistan with 73.7 percent of its residents living in poverty conditions. The national situation appears somewhat better if we look at the World Development Indicators, whereby 34.7 percent of Pakistanis live at \$3.20 a day.

### How much is Pakistan spending on pro-poor programs?

Total expenditure on education, health and social programs as per the PRSP database of the Ministry of finance and Pasha (2019) is 5.4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product in 2017-18. This is equivalent to over Rs 1.8 trillion, having a share of about one-fourth in total public spending. Education takes the larger chunk of expenditure, 2.4 percent of GDP, followed by social protection, 1.8 percent of GDP and health, 1.2 percent of GDP. The principal social protection program, the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), benefits about 5.7 million people, determined through the application of poverty scorecard. BISP covers about 74 percent of the people that need state protection as determined by the poverty scorecard method. The Asian Development Bank's Social Protection Indicators demonstrates that Pakistan is doing relatively well in providing social protection to its vulnerables when compared to some of its neighbouring countries like India and Bangladesh.

The Government has recently launched the Ehsaas Program to supplement existing poverty alleviation programs. The country has gone in for an International Monetary Fund (IMF) program to stabilize the economy. Programs aimed at stabilization are bound to adversely affect the more economically vulnerable segments of society as they institute demand management strategies along with higher taxation. Such strategies, first, slow down growth, squeezing employment opportunities and second, lead to inflation which reduces the purchasing power of the currency. In the first year, the current IMF program has exacerbated stagflation in the country affecting the common man. According to Pasha (2019), almost one million jobs have been lost in the first year of the Program, pushing almost 4 million below the poverty line. Social protection programs acquire significance under such circumstances as they provide a buffer to the weakest. The enhancement in the budgetary allocations to social protection in the 2019-20 budget, exhibiting a growth of 230 percent is welcome and demonstrates Pakistan's commitment to SDGs.

What more can Pakistan do to achieve SDG-1? Historically, Pakistan performed relatively better in achieving the Poverty reduction goal in the MDGs. As indicated above, the country was successful in pulling out 16.4 percent of its population out of poverty between 2004-05 and 2015-16, roughly in the span of a decade. The main factors behind the success were that the economy of Pakistan grew moderately while reducing inequality. That is, the benefits of growth were broadbased and the lower segments of the population were able to improve their quality of life also. Specifically, the economy grew by close to 5 percent per annum and inequality, as measured by PALMA ratio (the ratio of income share of the top 20 percent of the population to income share of the bottom 20 percent) declined by 1.5 percent annually. If Pakistan can achieve somewhat better than what it did in the recent past, Pakistan will be able to achieve the target of reducing national poverty level to half. That is, if we could achieve above 5 percent economic growth rate and also maintain the decline in inequality at 1.5 percent per annum, we will be able to achieve SDG1.

However, we are in the IMF program from 2019-20 to 2021-22. According to the projections by the IMF, during these three years the average growth rate will only be 3.3 percent while inequality is likely to rise because of factors indicated above. Therefore after 2021-22, Pakistan will have to achieve a growth rate annually of 5.6 percent in GDP and lower inequality by almost 2 percent per annum if the Poverty Goal is to be met. So what is required is not only higher but more inclusive growth. The key element of such a strategy will be growth in labour-intensive sectors like agriculture, small and medium enterprises and construction. Also, food security will have to be substantially enhanced. Further, the tax-to-GDP ratio must reach 20 percent by 2030 and the share of expenditure on social protection has to double to at least 3.6 percent of the GDP while spending on education and health must approach at least 5 percent of GDP.



“Poverty affects a child’s ability to enjoy basic rights. Living in poverty causes not only life long cognitive and physical impairment, it also damages a child’s emotional and spiritual development making them permanently disadvantaged. Pakistan, the sixth most populace country of the world, is home to 92 million children up to 18 years of age. Over 12.5 million or about 15 % of its children are engaged in child labor. 24% families live below National Poverty.”

## SDGs Watch

Article by **MNA Mehnaz Akber Aziz**

Chairperson, Special Committee on Child Rights  
of the National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs



## POVERTY & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Poverty affects a child's ability to enjoy basic rights. Living in poverty causes not only life long cognitive and physical impairment, it also damages a child's emotional and spiritual development making them permanently disadvantaged. Pakistan, the sixth most populace country of the world, is home to 92 million children up to 18 years of age. Over 12.5 million or about 15 % of its children are engaged in child labor. 24% families live below National Poverty. These children work to support their families at times in very hazardous conditions.

to walk miles to fetch water. A quarter of children have no toilet facilities and may have to go in fields and a quarter of the children who are under five are food deprived.<sup>1</sup> Birth registration rate to make them eligible for state protection is lowest (34%). Infant mortality rate is 74 per 1000 live births. 16% of the children under five have never been immunized against any diseases.<sup>2</sup>

Nutritional status of children is also alarming. Prevalence of stunting, wasting and underweight is high at 44%, 15% and 32% respectively. Pakistan ranks third in the world for stunting. Some 62% of children are anemic, more than half suffer from Vitamin A deficiency, and 40% are deficient in both zinc and Vitamin D. Under nutrition early in life has a serious implication for a child's future educational outcomes, income and productivity leading to intergenerational nutritional poverty affecting children's growth in the next generation and there by a nation's labor force (reducing its supply and quality) and economic development.

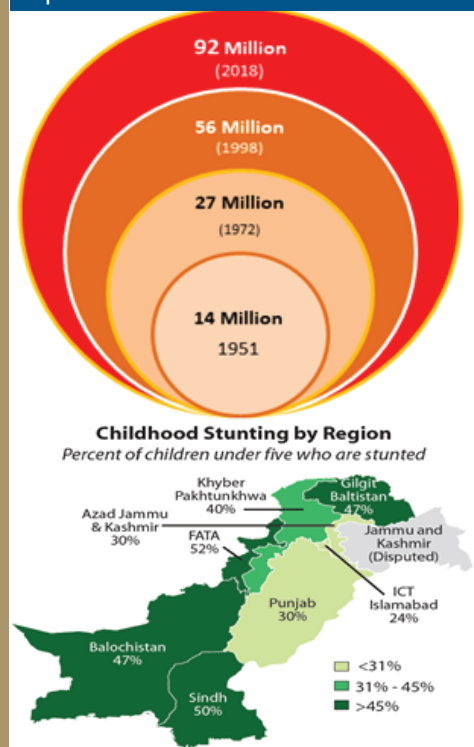
Not only good health is the right of every child but also access to quality education is equally important to achieve sustainable targets. An estimated 22.6 million children between the ages of 5 and 16 are out-of-school at the primary, middle and secondary levels – 44% of the country's children (40% boys vs. 49% girls, a significant gender gap). These include children who have never gone to school, as well as children who

dropped out.<sup>3</sup> So these children will not be able to participate in the sustainable development process.

As evident from the definition of United Nation's General Assembly definition of Poverty of children, "Children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection, and that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of the society," poverty of children is not necessarily linked to income level of their parents alone.

A number of dimensions and indicators of poverty of children relate to their access to social services, facilities, and opportunities to be offered by the state. Although poverty of parents is transmitted to their children, nevertheless fulfillment of a number of rights of children is the responsibility of the state, and not the parents. These rights include access to free and compulsory education, health care, immunization, and protection of children from violence and abuse as the cases of child abuse are on the rise in the country. From January to June in 2019, 1,304 cases of sexual abuse were reported in media. 729 girls and 575 boys were victim of sexual exploitation.<sup>4</sup>

Population of Children in Pakistan 1951-2018



Over 5 million children are drinking water from open sources such as rivers, ponds or streams or they have

<sup>1</sup> The Allam Iqbal Lecture – 'Child Poverty & Economic Development', the Pakistan Development Review 54:4 Part 1 (Winter 2015) pp. 277-386.

<sup>2</sup> The Allam Iqbal Lecture – 'Child Poverty & Economic Development', the Pakistan Development Review 54:4 Part 1 (Winter 2015) pp. 277-386.

<sup>3</sup> Situation Analysis of Children in Pakistan – UNICEF 2017

<sup>4</sup> Sahil Report



A large majority of children have been denied their basic rights plunging them into poverty, marginalization with negative impact on brain development and personality.

Pakistan's budgetary system does not recognize children as a separate 'unit of allocation'. Therefore, children are neither a 'sector of development' nor a 'unit of expenditure' in the existing public financial management system. Instead, child-specific investments are scattered under sectoral programs such as primary education, tertiary health care and social welfare. Accordingly, data availability is limited, both for assessing public financing and expenditure specific to children, as well as for tracking progress

on the impact of multiple interventions targeting children. Allocations are made through ad hoc policies, based on the priorities of the ruling Government.

We need to have well-nourished children for Pakistan's future prosperity and the country's ability to achieve the SDGs, especially SDG 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and SDG 16 (Poverty, Zero hunger, 'good health and well-being, quality Education, gender equality, clean water & Sanitation, Economic growth & Decent Work Reduced Inequalities, peace, justice & strong institutions').

Poor households have a heavy burden of dependents, which stretches their limited household resources, often to breaking



point. Neglect of this future generation may have serious consequences for sustainable development in Pakistan. There is a need to have social protection programs particularly in health and education and to introduce child and family benefit programs across Pakistan. To promote economic development and to reduce economic disparities it is important that the government should formulate policies and legislations for these children as research shows that child development goes hand in hand with poverty reduction and sustainable development. Here we have the example of China which was the first country to meet the poverty reduction MDG's and contributed more than 70% of the world's reduced poverty by focusing on child development.

Ehsaas Program launched by the government accords priority to various hindrances and risks faced by disadvantaged children in the country, including stunting due to malnutrition and exclusion from the educational

## Child Development Concerns By Life Cycle Stage



**Maternal & Early Years (pre-birth to 5 years)**

1. Mother's Health & Nutrition
2. Child's Physical & neurological health & development
3. Early Gender Socialization



**School age (6 to 10 years)**

1. Access to quality education
2. Physical, neurological, intellectual health & development
3. Safety (especially protection from violence & abuse)
4. Socialization & differentiation



**Adolescence (13 to 19 years)**

1. Access to quality education
2. Physical, neurological, intellectual health & development
3. Safety (especially protection from violence & abuse)
4. Socialization & differentiation





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opportunities due to poverty, and protection against violence. A new community and health and nutrition initiative will be launched to address stunting in children. Under this initiative, specialized nutritious food will be made available for stunted and wasted children in a cost-effective manner. De-worming drugs, iron, folic acid, micro-nutrient supplements will be supplied to children through government hospitals. The scheme of conditional cash transfer for education will be expanded. A second chance program for out of school-girls will be launched.

On-going successful programs for street children and victims of child and bonded labor will be up scaled in partnership with NGOs working in these areas.

Pakistan **150th out of 189 countries on Human Development Index (HDI)** will have to come forward to nurture and protect its strategic assets. Pakistan may continue to have low indicators of education and health till the policy makers and stakeholders to improve it undertake concrete and collective efforts. There is a need to have social protection programs

particularly health and education programs and to introduce child and family benefit programs across Pakistan. Innovative initiatives should be launched immediately. National Commission on Child Rights should be created without further delay in accordance with the Act already passed by the National Assembly during Sept 2017. A Child Development Fund should be created to finance programs for the welfare of children and rescuing them out of the quagmire of poverty.





“The new Ehsaas programme offers innovative solutions to what are undeniably multidimensional problems. In addition to tackling poverty this programme will have a positive impact across every one of the 17 Goals. Its objectives are to reduce inequality, invest in people, and lift lagging districts.”

Article by

# SDGs Watch

## Dr. Sania Nishtar

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation





# 2019 JUN - SEP QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## Realising the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030

An overview of Pakistan's ambitious initiative to tackle multidimensional poverty July 2019



Top of the list of the Sustainable Development Goals is for the world to "end poverty in all of its forms" by 2030. That is precisely the driving force behind Ehsaas, the ground-breaking new welfare initiative for Pakistan, launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan in March this year.

A quick glance at the latest development indicators in Pakistan makes clear the urgent need for this programme. Nearly a quarter of people live below the national poverty line, rising to over 70 percent in some rural areas. Maternal mortality rates remain stubbornly high, more than seven children out of every hundred die before their fifth birthday and malnutrition is rampant. Inequality is entrenched and will continue to grow unchecked unless radical steps are taken.

The new Ehsaas programme offers

innovative solutions to what are undeniably multidimensional problems. In addition to tackling poverty this programme will have a positive impact across every one of the 17 Goals. Its objectives are to reduce inequality, invest in people, and lift lagging districts.

Whereas previous development programmes under former governments have attempted to tackle only a handful of specific development indicators, the Ehsaas model acknowledges that poverty cannot be alleviated using a piecemeal approach. In total, the Prime Minister has announced 115 policies under the umbrella of Ehsaas, bringing together 28 government agencies to implement the programme in its entirety.

Ehsaas' poverty reduction strategy is articulated in four pillars namely, addressing elite capture and strengthening governance; safety nets for disadvantaged segments of the population; human capital development; and jobs and livelihoods.

Key to the success of Ehsaas will be how well new technology is utilised to streamline services and projects. Currently, social and economic welfare programmes are all administered separately, each using its own database that prevents the streamlining of services. Ehsaas aims to integrate these databases so that all social protection come under one digital platform.

There is no doubt that Ehsaas is an ambitious programme that will require coordination between government

agencies on a scale that has never before been attempted in Pakistan. But ambition is exactly what is needed if we are going to reach the global goals by 2030. Ehsaas can be transformational for Pakistan, ending the cycle of multidimensional poverty.

Ehsaas is about the creation of a 'welfare state' by countering elite capture and leveraging 21st century tools—such as using data and technology to create precision safety nets; promoting financial inclusion and access to digital services; supporting the economic empowerment of women; focusing on the central role of human capital formation for poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development; and overcoming financial barriers to accessing health and post-secondary education.

The program's principles and approaches also center on tapping whole-of-government multi-sectorial collaboration for solutions; ensuring joint federal-provincial leadership; and mainstreaming the role of the private sector through an approach which will provide a level playing field on the one hand and foster locally-relevant innovation on the other, to create jobs and promote livelihood in quick-win areas. The program's premise is grounded in the importance of strengthening institutions, transparency and good governance.







## Regional Perspectives

1. China has already lifted more than 500 million people out of poverty after three decades of economic reforms on the mainland. **What criteria does China use to measure poverty?** The

central government ruled in 2015 that rural residents with an annual income of less than 2,800 yuan (US\$427) were living in absolute poverty. The previous criteria set in 2011 was 2,300 yuan.

2. **What is Beijing's strategy to achieve its poverty alleviation targets?** Eight main measures have been drawn up, including developing industries such as tourism and e-commerce to help villagers find a job after occupational training. People who live in geologically hazardous areas prone to earthquakes or landslides, or are based in remote areas, will be relocated. There is also an emphasis on ensuring children get a basic education or occupational training to prevent poverty passing down the generations. The government will also develop public health services in poor areas as

medical bills are a frequent cause of families falling into poverty. The elderly and infirm will be eligible for social security payments.

3. **How successful has Sri Lanka been in alleviating poverty?** The Sri Lankan government has been successful in reducing poverty from 15.2% in 2006 to 8.9% in 2010, urban poverty was reduced from 6.7 to 5.3% while rural poverty was reduced from 15.7 to 9.5%, and the nation has made significant progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals on eradicating extreme poverty.

4. 21 percent of Nepal's population lives under the Poverty Line. Over a span of 8 years, Nepal's poverty curve has seen a downward movement. Programmes initiated by the government have contributed a lot to this decrease, such as Support to Knowledge and Lifelong Learning Skills Programme, Micro-Enterprise Development Programme, Community Infrastructure and Livelihood Recovery Programme and Strengthening

National Planning and Monitoring Capacity.

5. Poverty in Bhutan has been reduced to 8.2% in 2017 from 12% in 2012. Sources point to the fact that the pace of Bhutan's poverty reduction record has been the fastest relative to that of other countries in the South Asian region. The Rural Economy Advancement Program (REAP) identified 75 villages as requiring targeted support from the government. Likewise, The National Rehabilitation Program (NRP) was initiated by His Majesty's Secretariat with the objective to reduce poverty by enhancing the productive asset base of marginalized households through provision of land, transitional and livelihood support, and socioeconomic facilities; pro-poor interventions ranging from construction and renovation of houses, supply of agricultural inputs, and income-generating interventions are being implemented under this broad initiative.

## EVENTS:

### Pakistan's Parliamentary Delegation Presents the Voluntary National Review

A Parliamentary Delegation of the SDGs Task Force presented the Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2019 in New York on the 16th July 2019. The delegation comprised of Mr. Riaz Khan Fatyana, Convener National SDGs Task Force and Chairman of the Standing Committee of National Assembly on Law and Justice, Ms. Maleeka Bokhari, Parliamentary Secretary for Law and Justice, and Ms. Kanwal Shauzab, Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Development.

The delegation presented progress report and future plans on meeting the globally

agreed and nationally adopted anti-poverty SDGs. The VNR is a mechanism in which countries inform the UN about its implementation strategies to meet the goals and targets of the sustainable development agenda, also known as Agenda 2030. "The aim of this presentation is to showcase our progress and preparedness for SDGs, learning from our experience and exploring avenues for building partnerships for optimisation of our efforts towards meeting the SDGs," MNA Ms. Kanwal Shauzab, said while presenting the report in the ongoing HLPF on Sustainable Development that has been convened by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Pakistan's

Ambassador to UN, Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, accompanied the presenters and answered a range of questions posed by delegates.

The parliamentary delegation reiterated their pledge to advance a number of priority goals set out by SDGs, saying that the incumbent Parliament had brought an unprecedented focus on human development and poverty eradication. "The Parliament aims to promote human development through a people-centered, inclusive and democratic development path," Mr. Riaz Khan Fatyana said. "Subsequently the government has begun to execute the vision of leaving no one



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behind by a series of economic, social and environmental policy measures”, he added. Pakistan is committed to bringing systemic changes in social sector service delivery and revamping governance institutions. “Recognising that strong institutions are key to achieving SDGs, Pakistan is embracing on strengthening institutions and ensuring meritocracy”, said Ms. Kanwal Shauzab. She stressed the need for global

partnerships to proceed further on ambitious development plans and said that Pakistan looked forward to forging alliances to meet the goals and targets laid out in 2030 agenda.

“We are convinced”, she said, “that public private partnerships are the most efficient and inclusive way to accomplish our targets, and therefore we are engaging and

involving the private sector, civil society, media, think tanks and academia in our efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.”

She concluded by saying that Pakistan was committed to SDGs, with an aim to ensure a better life for our people and leave no one behind in the journey of building a prosperous, equitable and just society.





## 5TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

### ASIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE – AGENDA 2030, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND PRIORITIES OF THE STATES IN THE REGION

29th July to 2nd August 2019 – Islamabad, Pakistan



The Asia region of the CPA consists of Parliaments of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Provincial Assemblies of four provinces. The panel discussion was moderated by Chairperson of CPA Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and Member National Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs MNA Ms. Shandana Gulzar Khan. The discussion unpacked multiple themes, including:

- The Sustainable Development Agenda and regional priorities;
- The SDGs and Parliamentary Oversight;
- Monitoring rights-based frameworks of national and sub-national governments;
- Working together to identify

The fifth Asia Region Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Conference on was held from 29th July to 2nd August 2019, in Islamabad. Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan Mr. Asad Qaiser, being the President of the CPA Asia Region, hosted the conference. The CPA aims at promoting parliamentary diplomacy and democratic governance amongst member countries. Aim of this conference was to engage nations to come together for a common good on sustainable development, gender mainstreaming and learning from each other's experiences.

In view of international commitments and growing concerns regarding achievement of the SDG targets, it is necessary to take up the 2030 Agenda on priority basis by invoking strong parliamentary oversight. In this regard, the CPA 5th Regional Conference allowed the creation of synergies with parliaments to share experiences and best practices from amongst each other. The SDGs panel discussion focused on parliamentary structures and instruments in the region to institutionalise the SDGs in legal frameworks and to oversee the implementation of SDG targets at national and provincial levels.

innovative solutions to cross-cutting multi-sectoral problems and synergies.

Realising the importance of SDGs agenda, panelists stressed the need for parliamentary oversight and legislative reform at national as well as sub-national levels to ensure a discourse on sustainable development that is in line with national/provincial priorities.

During the course of discussion, best practice between regional countries were shared. Panelists examined the present mechanisms to oversee implementation of the SDGs, oversight and monitoring tools available within the parliamentary system. Solutions were identified from across regions to integrate sustainable development into national policies. It was highlighted that resource provision, efficient budgetary allocation and spending on SDGs by governments was a pre-requisite to effectively ensure development for all. Discussants agreed that regional parliamentary partnerships could help support and compliment the process of achieving SDGs in respective countries.



## Population and Poverty in Pakistan

**Dr. Zeba A. Sathar** (Tamgha-i-Imtiaz). Country Director, Population Council, Pakistan

Last year, Bangladesh's GDP per capita income caught up with and surpassed that of Pakistan, reaching US\$1698. This is impressive growth, considering that when the split between the two countries occurred in 1971, Bangladesh was considered the poorer part. Bangladesh has made incredible progress in lowering poverty -its per capita income was US\$635 in 2008 when ours was US\$991. Many have written that a major contributor in Bangladesh's growth is the strong and well-implemented policy that has kept its population growth rate lower than ours. Bangladesh was able to achieve many of its Millennium Development goals by 2015, whereas Pakistan has hardly recorded much progress.

Pakistan can however, claim progress in lowering poverty: despite low economic development, it has experienced some spurts of growth in per capita income and an associated decline in poverty. Income distribution has remained fairly stable and the influence of income disparities on poverty has at least not worsened. We are also fortunate that rapid growth in workers' remittances has contributed greatly to poverty reduction. But the stark truth is that had our population growth been slower, we would have seen a much more pronounced reduction in poverty and much better progress in many of our development outcomes by now. In fact, if our population growth rates had declined on the same lines as Bangladesh since 1980, we would have had 40 million fewer persons in the poverty head count in 2017<sup>1</sup>.

A major impetus of higher levels of income and savings is a lower dependency ratio and greater number of adult earners in a household. This ratio is kicking in for the richest and the middle-class families in Pakistan, leading to greater savings<sup>2</sup>, but not as much for the poorest households. A common explanation given for continued high fertility rates among subsistence families is that poor parents expect to benefit from having many children. The net "wealth flows" in these families go from children to parents. Parents might expect children to pull

the family out of poverty. This strategy on the part of parents to combat poverty by having more children to enhance their chances of enhancing household income or economic security leads to an inter-generational spiraling of the poverty cycle, with barely enough resources available for necessities like food, and little if any investment in the education and skills of children, especially girls.



But do our high birth rates really reflect the entire survival and socio-economic advancement calculus of poor parents? A study from Pakistan<sup>3</sup> shows that the poorest women have almost one more child than they want during their life time. They also face a much huger risk of unwanted pregnancy than richer counterparts. This shatters the myth that the poor do not want to reduce family size—they certainly do, and figure 1 below shows that there is unwanted fertility among all classes of Pakistani women, which is highest among the poorest women.

Figure 1: Actual and wanted fertility rate by wealth in Pakistan.



Source: Sundaram A et al., 2019<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Population Council calculations based on the 2017 Census and PSLMS.

<sup>2</sup>Sathar Z, Royan R and Bongaarts J, Capturing the Demographic Dividend in Pakistan, Islamabad, Pakistan: Population Council, 2013.

<sup>3</sup>Sundaram A et al., Adding It Up: Costs and Benefits of Meeting the Contraceptive and Maternal and Newborn Health Needs of Women in Pakistan, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2019, <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-up-meeting-contraceptive-mnh-needs-pakistan>.

<sup>4</sup>Sundaram A et al., Adding It Up: Costs and Benefits of Meeting the Contraceptive and Maternal and Newborn Health Needs of Women in Pakistan, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2019, <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-up-meeting-contraceptive-mnh-needs-pakistan>.



It is easy to see that women from the poorest families experience a three-fold disadvantage compared to richer women when it comes to managing the size of their families: they are more likely to be uneducated; they are less empowered within the family, especially in monetary terms; and they definitely face more issues of access to information and services for family planning. True, they want relatively more children—4 children as compared to half that number (2.2) among the wealthiest—but the gap between desired and actual fertility is also greatest among them. Another distressing reality, which is not reflected in the above graph but evident from other studies<sup>5</sup>, is that the poorest women experience more unwanted pregnancies on average, with associated financial and health costs.

Extensive research on the effect of women's education on fertility shows that education has a greater impact in terms of reducing family size, compared even to increasing their awareness of the cost and benefits of larger families, and their knowledge of safe contraceptives available. We are forced to acknowledge that larger family sizes in Pakistan are at least partly an outcome of the disproportionate powerlessness of women, and their inability to influence important decisions, including even their own fertility. Because of socio-cultural values, many women have little opportunity for a role outside their homes, making continued motherhood an important "choice" in their limited set of options.

Against this backdrop, it is extremely encouraging to announce a recent innovation adopted by four partner organizations—the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)/Punjab Population Innovations Fund/Population Council and UNFPA—that specifically aims to reduce poor women's barriers to accessing family planning services. The large majority of the 5 million women BISP seeks to support are currently married, and at risk of repeated—including unwanted—pregnancies. They lack resources for paying transport costs and fees to access family planning services. Through a pilot project entitled "Karen zindagi asaan" launched today (September 16, 2019) in one of the poorest districts of South Punjab, is testing the impact of paying fees to providers and also reimbursing travel costs to beneficiaries so they can avail family planning services. This intervention, which is among the recommendations of the Council of Common Interests 2018 meeting to address alarming population growth in Pakistan, must be lauded as an important step for enhancing responsiveness to ground realities.

One hopes similar steps of this nature will follow and on a larger scale. No doubt much of poverty alleviation must be addressed through economic reforms, planning, and generation of growth-led development. But at the same time, a great deal of distress can be alleviated and the unequal risks of transferring poverty to the next generation reduced by enabling poorer couples to have the numbers of children that they truly want and can afford to raise well.

<sup>5</sup> Sathar, Z., Singh, S., Rashida, G., Shah, Z., & Niazi, R. (2014). Induced abortions and unintended pregnancies in Pakistan. *Studies in family planning*, 45(4), 471-491.

# Parliamentary Business

Date	Resolution Title	SDG
10th June, 2019	 <p><b>MS. UZMA RIAZ;</b> to invite attention of Minister-in-Charge of the Prime Minister's Secretariat to a matter of urgent public importance regarding non-construction of 177 schools in district Abbotabad by Earthquake Reconstruction &amp; Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) despite a lapse of 14 years which were badly damaged due to earthquake in 2005, causing grave concern amongst the public.</p>	SDG 9: Innovation and Infrastructure
	 <p><b>DR. NAFISA SHAH ,DR. SHAZIA SOBIA ASLAM SOOMRO;</b> to invite attention of the Minister for Human Rights to a matter of urgent public importance regarding non-constitution of Child Rights Commission as required by the law, causing grave concern amongst the public.</p>	SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
16th July, 2019	 <p><b>MS. NAFEESA INAYATULLAH KHAN KHATTAK;</b> to invite attention of the Minister for Water Resources to a matter of urgent public importance regarding diversion of Neelum River for commissioning of the Nelum Jhelum Hydro Electric Project (NJHEP) due to which approximately 90% part of Neelum River dried up and business of the locals affected, causing grave concern amongst the public</p>	SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
29th July, 2019	 <p><b>MR. ALI NAWAZ AWAN;</b> to invite attention of the Minister for Finance and Revenue to a matter of urgent public importance regarding imposition of huge taxes on marble processing units in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resulting into closure of processing units, forcing the industrialist to shift to tax exempted areas of erstwhile FATA/PATA thus leaving thousands of workers jobless, causing grave concern amongst the public.</p>	SDG 8: Good Jobs and Economic Growth





Date	Resolution Title	SDG
9th August, 2019	<b>MS. KISHWER ZEHRA;</b> to invite attention of the Minister for Energy to a matter of urgent public importance regarding collapse of electricity transmission and distribution system of K-Electric and electrocution of nine persons due to monsoon rains in Karachi, causing grave concern amongst the public.	SDG 7: Clean Energy  SDG 9: Innovation and Infrastructure





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## Taskforce at Work



SDG'S Task Force meeting with Civil Society



SDG'S Task Force preparing for upcoming IPU Conference



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