



## **Targeting Food Security for the Region: Ensuring Parliament's Role in Accomplishing MDGs**



**TARGETING FOOD SECURITY FOR THE  
REGION: PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN  
ACCOMPLISHING MILLENNIUM  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Targeting Food Security for the Region: Parliament's Role in Accomplishing Millennium Development Goals: By Research Analysts.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction.....	1
Parliament's Role in Achieving Millennium Development Goals.....	7
Parliamentary Oversight.....	21
Conclusion.....	22

This briefing paper has been contributed by the  
Research Analysts, namely:-

1. Mr Hamayoun Khan, Research Analyst
2. Syed Ali Irteza, Research Analyst
3. Mr. Hassan Hakeem, Research Analyst



## **Targeting Food Security for the Region: Parliament's Role in Accomplishing Millennium Development Goals**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. Food Insecurity in South Asia**

The diverse countries of South Asia are faced with multiple challenges. Socio-political settings, certain low level conflicts, and lack of attention on issues other than national security have put these countries into another set of tests for the times to come. The Eight South Asian neighbors, apart from real or perceived traditional security problems, also face non-traditional human security threats, which are usually given less attention than what they merit. Resultantly, all countries are somewhat lagging in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and issues of immediate concern like food security.

The achievement of MDG targets in South Asia has so far remained a distant dream due to less investment in areas of agriculture, poverty reduction, gender parity, education and health. 80% of South Asia's rural population is dependent on agriculture. Poverty levels and hunger in this segment of the society is directly related to food availability, access, distribution and pricing. In South Asian context, food supply to this vast population affects health of women and children and is hence inter-woven with other MDG targets. Since, assuring food availability and stable pricing at the regional and local levels determines the degree of food security, the South Asia countries are faced with a daunting task ahead with one-fifth of the world population to feed.

## 1.2. Food Insecurity Pressures and Remedial Steps in South Asia

Water resources stand paramount to the agriculture sector of South Asia for the provision of food for the fast growing needs of increasing population. Pakistan remains the fastest growing population among South Asian countries with water issues including water shortage, wastefulness and loss due to either seepage or lack of reservoirs. In Pakistan, for example, the *per capita* availability of water has decreased to 1066 cubic meters coupled with inefficient irrigation where more than 60 percent of water is wasted at canals before reaching the destination farms, which has direct ramifications on grain production and agricultural economic activity.

Changing climatic conditions are also exacerbating the food insecurity situation in the region. Pakistan is one of the more vulnerable countries in this regard. Farming practices that have developed over centuries have evolved as response to the climatic patterns of the region. However, with rapidly changing climate, agriculture, farming and food supply remain highly at risk. The dire consequence of climatic change in Pakistan has resulted in floods of 2010, 2011, 2012 in major agricultural lands of the country, droughts in other parts, famines, and hence greater improbability in agricultural production. These climatic changes have direct impact on crops, forests, and livestock, water sources, land and soil, drastic shifts in spatial patterns, and socio-economic challenges.

The floods of 2010 severely affected almost 20 million people in the country resulting in the destruction of life, livestock and infrastructure. More than 13,000 water courses were destroyed and

almost 11 million livestock and poultry heads were lost. Disrupting life in almost three-fifth of the whole country, most of the affected parts were the ones that were already highly vulnerable due to food insecurity. Such floods result in unprecedented damages in terms of economic and agriculture. The food supply gaps thereafter create huge food shortages resulting in exponentially declining social conditions. The deteriorating food availability situation asserts pressure on the overall food economic of the country.

The increasing population is yet another challenge to food security in the region. Although population growth rates have dropped from the previous high, in some of the countries population growth is still an area of concern. In Pakistan, population growth rate has decreased from 3 percent in 1980s to 2.09 percent in 2009-10, but it still remains the fastest growing population in region. The widening gap between population and food supply is depicted in inadequate food access and unavailability resulting in uneven distribution of food across the country.

Other South Asian countries also face similar food insecurity pressures. They remain highly vulnerable to changing climate, rising population, uneven urbanization trends, and unforeseen natural disasters. Home to one of the largest and quickly growing population in the world, the region has significant impact on food security around the world. In recent years, not only have agricultural growth rates declined but demographic pressures have also contributed to inadequate availability of food.

SAARC countries have realized the risks attached to these growing



challenges. The responsibility lies not only with individual countries but also in recognizing a capacity to work together with other South Asian partners. The development policies for agriculture sector have direct correlation with food security in the region. Various regimes in South Asia have formulated strategies to mitigate the impact of shifting natural variables and implemented mechanisms for increasing food availability and improving access. Strategies as 'Grow more Food', 'Targeted Public Distribution System' and 'Mid-day Meal Scheme' in India, 'Benazir Income Support Programme' (BISP) and provision of subsidies for agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, electricity, irrigation and seeds by the parliament in Pakistan, trade-policy related measures to ensure food security and introduction of 'National Nutrition Programme' in Bangladesh, are remarkable initiatives by the domestic governments to eradicate poverty and fight food insecurity. Though there remain structural inconsistencies and unresolved limitations, the countries of SAARC are committed to guarantee effective food supply to their population.

### **1.3. Steps to Ensure Food Security in Pakistan**

From 2000-2007, the annual agricultural growth rate in Pakistan fell considerably to less than 3 percent from being consistently over 4 percent during the previous decade. This situation was exacerbated by the floods that hit Pakistan in the following years increasing food insecurity in the country. The government and the parliament of Pakistan, nonetheless, sought to address this situation on urgent basis and at several fronts soon after the 2008 elections.

In May 2008, the, erstwhile Prime Minister Yousuf Raza set up a Task

Force on Food Security, chaired by Mr. Sartaj Aziz to review the production, availability, storage and consumption of essential food commodities, examine price trends and devise an action plan for promoting food security for the vulnerable groups.

In light of the Article 38 (d) of the Constitution of Pakistan, Provision of Food for All is the state responsibility. The government, fully supported by the parliament, has therefore been committed to evolve an efficient and equitable system of food procurement, storage, and distribution, in order to ensure affordable food availability throughout the year all across the country. Concrete steps have been taken to ensure food availability to poor households by adopting a pro-poor growth strategy and providing substantial non-farm employment.

Several poverty alleviation and food security programs have been launched by various governments. At the moment, a food support program is being operated by the Pakistan Baitul Maal. The PBM has been financed through budgetary allocations in the form of non-lapsable grants. It has also received grants from the Central Zakat Fund and the provincial governments. The Food Support Program (FSP) of PBM is an important aspect of its relief efforts. This program is monitored by Steering Committees at the federal, provincial and local levels. The program involves an annual payment of Rs.3000 per household in one *lump sum* payment. Punjab program is another major food support program that was started with an initial outlay of Rs. 22.0 billion. It provides cash payments of Rs.1000 per household per month to 1.8 million households. The most important food



support program however is operated under the Benazir Income Support Program started by the present government on 14th August 2008, and provided legal protection as an Act of parliament. The program provides cash payments of Rs. 1000 per month (on quarterly basis) to 5.5 million families, which covers almost 40% of the population below the poverty line and 18% of the total population. Started with a budgetary allocation of Rs. 34 billion for the first year, the allocation for the financial year 2012-13 is Rs. 70 billion. The initiative has been acknowledged and appreciated all over the world, especially by Secretary-General United Nations Ban Ki-moon and President World Bank, Robert B. Zoellick, who have termed it a model for other countries to follow in poverty alleviation and reaching out of vulnerable people.

The government, as approved by the parliament, also provides subsidy on fertilizer in order to encourage balanced input use for increasing agriculture production. An initiative known as the Benazir Tractor scheme was also introduced to provide farmers with tractors at subsidized rates for improved farming practices. Research funds are allocated to Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) and other provincial agriculture research institutes to promote research activity for high yielding and disease resistant varieties of food crops for better production. The government also formulated National Program for Improvement of Water courses in Pakistan for water conservation and productivity enhancement through high efficiency irrigation system. Recently, the Ministry of National Food Security and Research presented a 'National Zero Hunger Programme' to the

Prime Minister which shall be implemented soon. The five-year program, already lauded by the experts, aims to reach a total of 61 million food insecure people across the country with a total cost of USD 16 billion.

## **2. Parliament's Role in Achieving Millennium Development Goals**

The incumbent Pakistan has been active in consolidating policies and strategies for the achievement of MDG targets. Parliamentary democracy returned to the country in 2008 after a long period of dictatorial rule marked with under development in social sector. The sitting parliament has ever since been active in putting together mechanisms to ensure the accomplishment of MDGs.

The global economic crunch of 2008 along with rising oil and food prices in the international market the same year had serious ramifications for Pakistan's social and development sector. The security concerns of Pakistan have further aggravated the situation; war on terror in the western neighborhood of Pakistan and domestic front has affected the economy severely.

With all the internal turmoil and external influences, the Parliament has remained dedicated to achieving MDG goals and indicators to ensure accomplishment of these targets by legislating for, and investing in, economic and social development. A number of initiatives have been taken towards this end through the introduction of new acts by the parliament. Provision to access of new markets, technological innovation, friendly terms of trade, and legislation and investment in social sectors, are all steps taken, or facilitated by the

parliament, to attain MDG targets.

To monitor the progress of MDGs, the international community has defined 18 targets and 48 indicators. In this regard, the Parliament in Pakistan has adopted 34 indicators for monitoring progress on MDGs and has made considerable progress in several areas, especially focusing on the target of reducing poverty to 13 percent by 2015. However, the most serious indicators that still need most attention are universal primary education, reduction in child mortality, improving maternal health and ensuring environmental sustainability. Hence the major challenge is to continuously improve the social status of people through better legislation and budgetary allocations.

### **2.1 Legislation and Budgetary Allocations by the Parliament**

With special focus on MDGs, the parliament has been rigorously involved in legislations and budgetary allocations to meet the MDGs targets.

#### **2.1.1. Poverty Reduction**

The sitting parliament's role has been exemplary as far poverty reduction is concerned. The enactment of number of bills and budgetary allocations speaks volumes of efficiency and dedication of parliamentarians who have provided relief to the general public through the provision of a variety of programs. The parliament's commitment to follow a sustained poverty reduction strategy and a minimum of 4.5 percent of GDP to social and poverty related expenditures is clearly reflected in the allocations to the pro-poor



sectors. The government prioritized 17 pro-poor sectors through the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) in the PRSP-II, which provides a link between the policy priorities and the budget realities. Expenditure on pro-poor sectors in 2007-08 stood at 5.57 percent of GDP. In 2008-09, these were 7.46 percent of GDP and in 2009-10, 7.57 percent of GDP. These expenditures were well above the requirement under the law. During 2010-11, total expenditures for these sectors were increased further and amounted to Rs 1245.541 billion, which is 6.9 percent of GDP. Already Rs. 919.564 billion expenditures have been made in these sectors during the current fiscal year.

Similarly, the nationwide introduction of cash as income support under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has been the most successful and historic step to eradicate poverty in the ultra poor households. The program provides support to citizens living below the poverty line. Introduction of micro finance by the parliament in the form of cash as loan for establishing businesses is yet another step towards reducing poverty. As per the parliament's directive, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal provides cash as income support grant for girls' weddings as well as for provision of food supplements and education for the under-privileged class. Similarly, the sitting parliament was successful in introducing People's Work Program for the provision of electricity, gas, transportation of farm products to markets, and water supply to the rural household. People's Rozgar scheme and subsidies provided on wheat, sugar and fertilizers are to ensure that MDG target of eradicating poverty is fulfilled. The parliament has made sure that

consumer products are delivered to the rural population and hence utility stores have been introduced in the rural neighbourhoods, apart from the urban centres.

- **The Benazir Income Support Program Act, 2010:**

Committed to social protection, the Parliament of Pakistan responded to the double-digit inflation, resulted by the increase in oil prices in the year 2008, in the form of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). Under this program, enrolled families, from the underprivileged sections of the society, are paid cash assistance of Rs.1000/month apart from benefits provided under graduation strategy such as long term interest free returnable financial assistance, vocational & technical training, and health & life insurance coverage. The Parliament's Act to launch the program was an aspiration to achieve multiple targets of MDGs.

BISP was initiated in October 2008 with an initial allocation of Rs.34 billion (US \$ 425 million) by the parliament for the financial year 2008-09 and aimed at supporting 3.5 million families during the year. The allocation for the financial year 2012-13 is Rs. 70 billion which shall provide cash assistance to 5.5 million families, covering almost 40% of the population below the poverty line. The program has aimed at achieving MDGs through reducing consumption based poverty, improvements in health and nutrition, income generation and human development.

The program is being successfully implemented all across the



country. The four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Islamabad Capital Territory are all being covered under this program. Application forms were distributed among the Parliamentarians in equal number (8000 to each member of the National Assembly and Senate and 1000 to each member of the Provincial Assemblies) irrespective of party affiliations for distribution among the eligible families. The BISP Bill was later passed by both houses of the parliament and signed by the President of Pakistan in the form of Benazir Income Support Program Act, 2010. Parliament's dedication to enact the Bill speaks volumes of its commitment towards achievement of MDGs within prescribed timing.

**Waseela-e-Haq (The Right Source) Program:** A BISP initiative with the mission statement 'Breaking the vicious cycle of poverty through micro loan'. It is a project that extends small loans to women to start small personal businesses, empowering and helping them to grow personally as well as contributing to national development. The initiative does not only empower women but is also to guarantee MDG target achievement.

### **2.1.2. Health**

Providing quality health services has been the primary focus of the parliament, passing a number of bills to ensure multidimensional health policies. In Pakistan, like other developing countries, there

remain immense challenges in terms of providing basic health facilities. The incumbent parliament has committed itself on improving health standards.

To control mortality rate and improve child health, immunization strategies were introduced. Children less than 1 year of age immunized against measles showed that the provincial disaggregation of MDG indicator during 2004-05 to 2008-09 has declined in all provinces except Punjab. Lady Health Workers program has been expanded to reach out to pregnant women in rural settings, providing them with multivitamin supplements, in addition to their basic duties of educating women on health care and family planning.

Similarly, the introduction of 'Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Program' (MNCH) is to improve maternal and child health with special focus on poor and disadvantaged classes. The program has trained 10,000 community health and nutrition workers and has provided comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care training services in more than 300 health facilities.

Under the Health Policy adopted by the parliament in 2009 special attention was given to improve maternal health and to achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015 as per the MDG targets. The MNCH program ensures training and deployment of new cadre of community midwives. Furthermore, the health policy aims at expanding the number of lady health workers to 120,000 in order to introduce new methods of family planning, birth control and health promotion. In 2011-12 the parliament allocated Rs. 2,646 million for

the health budget of the country.

Examining the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), the situation has improved during the last few years. The ratio has declined considerably to 276 deaths per 100,000 live births. The key objectives under the health policy of the current government includes reduction in widespread prevalence of communicable diseases, addressing inadequacies in primary and tertiary health care facilities, bridging basic nutritional gaps and improving the drug sector to ensure availability, affordability and quality of drugs. These steps are as under:-

- **Waseela-e-Sehet (Health & Life Insurance) Program:**

Waseela-e-Sehet program initiated under BISP is one of the major initiatives improving access to quality health services and reducing income loss from catastrophic health shocks and providing financial cushion of Rs. 100,000/- in case of death of the breadwinner of the eligible beneficiary family. The initiative caters for improving health related MDGs as well as providing economic well-being. The program provides protection against infant mortality and promotes mechanisms for rural health initiatives.

The parliament has passed a number of laws concerning health. The Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 2010 has been enacted by the parliament. Through these Acts, the parliament will ensure and monitor proper transplantation and enforce prescribed standards for recognized medical institutions and hospitals. Through this



Act of Parliament proper punishment has been prescribed for any illegal and/or commercial transplant of organs. The step is a major way, forward in achieving health care MDGs. Similarly, the Medical and Dental Council (Amendment) Act, 2012 of the parliament will give approval to educational institutes to practise as hospitals after ensuring their professional development and through transparent procedures thereby ensuring quality health and welfare for people. This act will empower the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) to have quality check on both government and private medical and dental educational institutions, and will also provide better standards for medical and dental education and practice in the country. The PMDC will be allowed to penalise medical and dental colleges on mismanagement and poor quality of education.

### **2.1.3. Education**

Under the Article 25-A of the constitution of Pakistan, the state commits to eradicate illiteracy and provide education up-to the secondary school level, guaranteeing free and compulsory education for all. This new constitutional provision paved the path for making elementary education entirely free and compulsory.

The present parliament has paid special attention to education and literacy through legislation and budgetary allocations. Although literacy rate in Pakistan remains considerably low as compared to the MDG targets of 88 percent by 2015, there has been some improvement with the rate rising to 58 percent by 2010-11.

- **Waseela-e-Rozgar (Vocational & Technical Training) Program:** Another BISP initiative that aims to provide education to women by helping them to acquire vocational and technical training and become economically independent. The trainings include both certificate-based skills, and in-house or product-based training. The program aspires to target two major MDGs; eradicating poverty and hunger through the use of skills and imparting education.
- **Waseela-e-Taleem (Education) Program:** Another initiative under BISP in line with the commitment of Parliament to achieve universal primary education is Waseela-e-Taleem. Under this program, 8.5 million children of BISP beneficiary families who are out of school shall be provided education through conditional co-responsibility cash transfers (CCT) by making cash payments to families who will send their 5-12 year old children to school. Initially, the program shall be launched in 20 districts in all parts of the country by the end of 2012. It shall be subsequently expanded to other parts of the country. The MDG target to achieve universal education through the provision of opportunities will be catered for through this initiative.

Besides these initiatives, the parliament has been active in passing bills to endorse education and vocational training. The Shifa, Tameer-e-Millat University Act, 2012 NUML and NDU Act, 2011 and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission Act, 2011 have guaranteed women's inclusion & promotion in key academic,



research, and vocational institutions. This current parliament ensured empowerment for Pakistani women in all academic and educational related institutions.

- **The NFC Institute of Engineering and Technology Multan Act, 2012** aims at improving autonomy while improving governance and management to enhance the quality of higher education in the country. The Institute of Space Technology Act, 2012 passed by the parliament is to cater to the need of training expert manpower and imparting technical education in disciplines of space technology and to do research and service to society by disseminating quality knowledge.
- **The Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University Act, 2012** was passed to encourage establishment of new universities/degree awarding institutes to provide more opportunities for higher education learning in fields of medicine, engineering and information technology. The National Defense University Act, 2011 was passed to promote quality education in the sector of national defence and national security studies.
- Recently, a total of 134,118 youth also received vocational and technical training under the President's Funni Maharat Programme and Prime Minister's Hunermand Pakistan Programme. In lieu of these developments, the parliament approved an increased budget for education in current fiscal year to the tune of Rs. 39,513 million.

#### **2.1.4. Environment**

Pakistan has made considerable progress in strengthening environment management institutions during the last decade. At the national level, Pakistan Environment Protection Agency and Environment Section of Planning & Development Division have been established.

The Parliament in Pakistan recognizes the significance of incorporating environmental concerns as an imperative subject in its sustainable development strategy. Establishment of policy framework for environment including formulation of conservation strategies in Northern Areas and Baluchistan in this regard is noteworthy. Similarly, environmental tribunals have been established at the district level.

Realizing the sensitivity of the environmental issue, the parliament has considerably increased the budgetary allocation to Rs. 6 billion of projects related to environment in the Public Sector Development Program (PSPD). The program comprises of 55 small and medium projects that include environment education and environment protection, mass awareness campaigns, protected area management, biodiversity, watershed management, and forestry. Furthermore, Rs. 2.7 billion have been allocated for clean drinking water, Rs. 1.8 billion for forestry and biodiversity while another Rs. 1.5 billion allocated for climatic change related projects, and air pollution.

As per the National Conservation Strategy (NCS), the parliament has directed the concerned authorities to monitor air pollution in combination with water pollution and its negative impacts on human

health and environment. It was due to this understanding that the country decided to shift her large fleet of vehicles to Compressed Natural Gas (CNG). With increasing petroleum prices, utility of CNG is not only economical but also relatively environment friendly. Today, Pakistan has become the third largest user of CNG in the world.

#### **2.1.5. Gender Parity**

The sitting parliament in Pakistan has keenly focused on gender parity and has emphasized on social and economic steps in this regard. According to the Constitution of Pakistan, gender equality is specifically guaranteed under Article 25 (equality before law and equal protection under the law) and Article 27 (nondiscrimination based on gender alone). The Constitution has guaranteed the protection of institution of marriage, family, women empowerment as well as ensuring full participation of women in all spheres of social life.

With the utmost efforts shown by the current parliament, women are now seen more at the helm of affairs and adding more to the progress and prosperity of the country. Dr. Fehmida Mirza has been elected as the first woman Speaker of the National Assembly with the highest number of women Parliamentarians. The current parliament, to its credit has the distinction of passing 28 Acts and numerous bills which specifically worked for the betterment of women status and extended more protection to them in all sphere of life.

To ensure MDGs achievement through promotion of gender equality and women empowerment, the sitting parliament enacted **The**



**Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2009** to address public concern and recognize the gravity of domestic violence on women. The Bill aims to empower women by adopting zero tolerance for violence against the gender. The perpetrators of the crime under this Bill are liable to be punished under Criminal Code of Pakistan. The offender will be subject to maximum punishment of two years prison or fine to the tune of Rs 200,000 and minimum punishment of six months term and fine amounting to Rs 100,000. The amount of fine will be given to aggrieved person and the court will ensure it.

Another legislation regarding the same issue is the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2009** that aims at addressing sexual harassment issues faced by women in Pakistan. The amendment is to add a specific section that does not give a vague term and makes it useable at/for women in cases of insult, humiliation and intimidation.

Bearing in mind harassment has been one of the most common issue faced by women throughout South Asia, in particular, the parliament of Pakistan **amended the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898**. Previously, Section 509 of the PPC declared any word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of women, as basis for a person's liability to the sentence. This bill passed took the spirit of PPC forward by the insertion of a new section 509A and made it more effective by increasing the maximum punishment for the offense. The bill elaborates and specifies what constitutes harassment of any person in public, private, and work places. Another important legislation by the sitting parliament is the

enactment of **Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010** that ensures the creation of an environment free of sexual harassment and to open the path for women to have equal opportunity to earn livelihood and participate in the development of the country.

The parliament has also passed **The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act, 2012** to provide legal and financial assistance to the women languishing in jails by amending "Women in Distress and Detention Fund Act, 1996. Prevention of **The Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act, 2011** is aimed at eradicating negative traditions and customs that target women in our society. The bill stipulates that a woman cannot be used for settling a dispute or to pay off an outstanding debt. Such cruel acts are dealt with severe punishments. The bill also calls for ending other social evils including depriving women of their inheritance and contracting them into forced marriages.

Another landmark achievement by the parliament is the legislation of **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2011** which stipulates 14-year imprisonment sentence and fines up to Rs 1 million for those who commit the crime through **The Acid Control and Acid Crimes Prevention, Act, 2011**. The criminal Act of throwing acid on women was becoming common and there was no proper legislation in the past for such heinous acts. Through this legislation, the import, production, transportation, hoarding, sale and use of acid will be prevented and it will provide legal support to acid and burn victims.

The sitting parliament has passed **The National Commission on the**



**Status of Women Act, 2012** that promotes social, economic, political and legal rights of women, as provided in the Constitution of Pakistan and in accordance with international declarations, Conventions, treaties, Covenants and Agreements relating to women, including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This national level commission for women with full administrative and financial autonomy will monitor and ensure compliance within national laws and international conventions.

### **3. Parliamentary Oversight**

#### **3. 1. Special Committee on Millennium Development Goals**

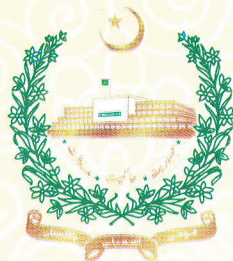
One of the most remarkable milestones achieved by the parliament has been the formation of a 'Special Committee on Millennium Development Goals' dedicated to keeping a track of MDGs target success, its attainment and conformance to the milestones, and monitoring progress on attaining MDGs in Pakistan. The committee was formed under the supervision of Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Member National Assembly (MNA), in 2011 with several other parliamentarians as members. The committee since its inception has been keenly serving the purpose of MDG progress, issues and challenges in Pakistan, and prioritization of these targets. The Special Committee meets periodically to discuss the challenges and hurdles in achievement of MDG targets and co-ordinates between different ministries, offices and provides recommendations. With her rich experience in social sector, the Chairperson Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali has been actively involved in bringing together different stakeholders

and has raised issues on the parliament's floor. The committee is the only one of its kind in South Asia, being the first dedicated parliamentary committee on MDG goals attainment. With no such body functioning in any other SAARC country, the excellence of this special Committee is an example for other countries to follow. experience in social sector, the Chairperson Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali has been actively involved in bringing together different stakeholders and has raised issues on the parliament's floor. The committee is the only one of its kind in South Asia, being the first dedicated parliamentary committee on MDG goals attainment. With no such body functioning in any other SAARC country, the excellence of this special Committee is an example for other countries to follow.

#### **4. Conclusion**

There should be no denial of the fact the food insecurity levels in South Asia are alarmingly high in certain areas and most of the SAARC countries still lag when it comes to fully accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals. Parliamentarians, in this regard, have an important role and responsibility to play. In all their capacities and functions, the parliaments need to ensure food security to the people of the area and remain committed to the accomplishment of MDGs. The reality that non-traditional security threats to the region are more pressing needs to be recognized and given priority attention. The parliamentarians will have to lead on this and ensure a commitment to human security issues, especially food security.





National Assembly Secretariat, Parliament House,  
Constitution Avenue, Islamabad, Pakistan  
[www.na.gov.pk](http://www.na.gov.pk)