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# SDGs Watch:

## PARLIAMENTARY PURSUIT FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

[Newsletter March - August 2020]



COVID-19  
Special Edition



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*From the desk of*  
**Mr. Asad Qaiser**

Honourable Speaker National Assembly of Pakistan

Given the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 pandemic on social, economic, health, education sectors, the National Assembly and Government of Pakistan are working together to set an example for other countries. We have taken urgent necessary steps to put together institutional structures and notified the Parliamentary Committee on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). Parliamentary efforts are being made to combat the consequences of this pandemic at all levels.

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 healthcare, nutrition, education, poverty, gender inequality, climate change and more.

As the patron of the National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs, 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, that the Task Force on SDGs has developed an Action Plan on COVID-19. I am hopeful that the Task Force continues to coordinate relief efforts, monitor and raise awareness to fight the pandemic.

Given the unusual circumstances, the Task Force would continue to lead the people of Pakistan, especially youth of the country and prove to be an example to the parliamentary system of government that this democracy is committed to flourish.

*From the desk of*

## **Mr. Riaz Khan Fatyana**

Convener - National Parliamentary Task Force on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Assembly of Pakistan

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.

In light of the current on-going novel COVID-19, it is essential to remember that Parliamentarians are at the forefront of the fight to prevent, slow the spread, and mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 on society and our economy. To successfully carry out our responsibilities, legislators must engage with those we represent by understanding and moderating public concerns by ensuring delivery of resources to those in need.

World Health Organisation estimates, Pakistan will cross 200,000 COVID-19 patients mark, it is essential that we multiply our resources on testing. We, as Parliamentarians play a key role in bridging society with the Executive. Parliamentarians can play vital roles in their respective constituencies ensuring that social discipline is followed to stop the spread of disease. With the expected economic repercussion, alongside other indicators, SDG-1 (No Poverty) and SDG-2 (No Hunger) indicators are surely to fallout.

The Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs has developed a strategy articulating targets to combat COVID-19.



The strategy is based on 4 principles: monitoring, coordination efforts at constituency level, outreach & awareness, and inclusivity of all. It is essential to realise that we as Parliamentarians must catalyse our efforts to combat the pandemic.

SDGs are meant to address challenges and the universal need for development that works for all. No doubt, it is an uphill work but we need to join hands, take up the sustainable development agenda and work in harmony towards achieving national development.



# The Impact of COVID-19 on SDG-13 (Climate Action)

## Hon. Mrs. Naureen Ibrahim

Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan and Chair of the Sub-Committee on SDG – 13 (Climate Action) of the National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs



@NaureenIbrahim

The COVID-19 pandemic has rocked the world. First case appeared in Wuhan, China, but now there is hardly a place where the novel virus may not be playing with human lives. It has severely affected almost every part of the world. The renowned bio-scientists are struggling to invent a preventive medicine. The mutational characteristic of the virus is posing a serious challenge for the scientists to come with a cure for the disease. Even the most well prepared and developed countries have been hit by the virus.

Human life as we know it has come to a halt due to the lockdown policy on behalf of the governments. Keeping the conspiracy theories aside, there is a debate on the virus regarding its impact on the global environment. And the prominent argument goes that due to the worldwide lockdown phenomenon, the air quality has improved to a considerable level. Photos of reduced smog in China and unpolluted canals in Italy, have been shared all over the social media in this respect. The people who are in favour of this argument implicitly hold that the current lockdown policy as a result of COVID-19 is eco-friendly. But there is another side of the story that must be considered while taking on these views. No doubt, worldwide lockdown might have resulted in improved global air quality, but it would be far less than the reality to say that it is eco-friendly.

With industries and large-scale firms shuttered down, the emission of CFCs and other obnoxious gases has reduced to a large extent. Consequently, the global air quality index has risen. But due to this comprehensive lockdown policy, a large portion of the global population has been quarantined and rendered jobless.



If this continues ahead, there would be no wrong to say that another challenging pandemic is awaiting us: The Hunger Throe.

While there have been some environmental gains, these have been offset by the abandonment of many environmental sustainability programs. For example, in the United States, smaller municipalities have halted recycling programmes due to the risks associated with the spread of the virus. Likewise, Italy has imposed a ban on infected people from sorting waste. Similarly, many corporations have overturned disposable bag bans and begun relying once again on single-use plastic bags. This can result in severe land pollution which is for sure not eco-friendly.

There has also been an increase in medical waste. A large portion of personal protective equipment that healthcare professionals are using can only be worn once before being disposed of.



Hospitals in Wuhan, for example, produced over 200 tons of waste per day during the peak of their outbreak, compared to an average of less than 50 tons prior.

This enormous scale of waste material can cause a serious land pollution threat if not handled timely. The gravity of the situation is described by the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in a recently published report in which it is stated that fossil fuel use would have to decline by about 10 percent around the world, and would need to be sustained for a year to show up clearly in carbon dioxide levels.

Visible, positive impacts—whether through improved air quality or reduced greenhouse gas emissions—therefore are but temporary. Even if mass isolation were aiding in the reduction of climate change, it would not be a sustainable way of cleaning up the environment. We need to introduce change in our ways of production and consumption to save our planet.

In the post COVID-19 period, we must consider all the ways of making nature safe and healthy before coming up with production and consumption techniques—a healthy nature nurtures healthy life. When this crisis is over and life is normalised, we must take this as an opportunity to introduce policies to make our environment greener and safer. We will have to revisit our lifestyle altogether. We will have to resort to renewable energy production, sensible use of products.

The COVID-19 crisis requires people around the world to trust in their governments and self-regulate their movements. Flattening the COVID curve requires each person to play their part. The same will be true to flatten the environmental calamity curve. Governments have to inform people of policy and people need to implement this policy. The Government will have to regulate commercial and industrial sectors but people will have to show a behavioural change. We cannot take the single use plastic bag approach to the planet where we use, abuse, and dispose.



# COVID-19 Threatens Achievement of SDGs

## Hon. Ms. Kanwal Shauzab

Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan and Parliamentary Secretary for Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives.



@KanwalMna

COVID-19 outbreak is currently a huge challenge not only at the national but also at the global level. The world is not only trying to control the spread but also trying to tackle its impact on the economy, society and environment. This novel virus has far-reaching socio-economic impacts and it has upended human lives, livelihood and caused serious economic damage to the global economy.

Emergence of COVID-19 seems to threaten the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The cost of COVID-19 in terms of loss of human lives is painful, but the effects on sustainable development prospects are also worrisome. This crisis has hit at a time when a number of countries were making good progress in SDGs. The pandemic has exposed the flaws in global health systems. Weak health system (SDG #3), prevalence of poverty (SDG #1) and lack of education (SDG #4) can further aggravate the health crisis. This deadly virus may impact all SDGs resulting in destabilising the world socio-economic system. We cannot ignore the SDGs while designing responses to this health crisis.

Statistics related to impact of COVID-19 on SDGs is thought provoking and quite scary. UNESCO estimates that some 1.25 billion students are affected with the temporary closure of education institutions; posing a serious challenge to the attainment of SDG # 4 which is Quality Education. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that some 25 million people could lose their jobs because of this pandemic. Those in informal employment will suffer most due to lack of social protection.



Crucially, in many parts of the world, the pandemic and its effects are aggravated due to non availability of clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), weak economic growth and the absence of decent work (SDG 8), pervasive inequalities (SDG 10), and above all, entrenched poverty (SDG 1) and food insecurity (SDG 2).

It is imperative to respond to this pandemic by addressing the underlying factors through the Sustainable Development Goals.

SDG # 6, which is Clean Water & Sanitation is of utmost importance in preventing the spread of Coronavirus. Provision of safe water, sanitation and hygienic conditions play an essential role in protecting human health during all infectious disease outbreaks, including the current COVID-19 outbreak. One of the most effective ways to control COVID-19 transmission is to keep good hand hygiene by regularly washing hands or using sanitiser. The World Health Organisation provided guidelines advising that washing hands more frequently for at least 20 seconds is important to prevent outbreaks.

However, globally three billion people, 40% of the world population do not have access to even basic hand washing facilities at home. Nearly a billion people experience only partial access or regular shutoffs even when they do have piped water, making frequent hand washing difficult or impossible.

Some 2.2 billion people lack safe drinking water and 4.2 billion people live without access to adequate sanitation. Meanwhile, the devastating effects of climate change continue to compromise the ability of communities to access safe and clean water.

Excessive water consumption poses greater threat to the environment and achievement of SDG 6 targets. Therefore, there is an urgent need to understand the importance of water management.

Pakistan has been long facing the water scarcity and inadequate facilities of supply of clean drinking water and sanitation. Pakistan is one of the 37 countries of the world with extremely high levels of water stress. According to the Water Aid report, Pakistan is included in top 10 countries with lowest access to clean water. Out of a population of 212 million, 21 million people don't have access to clean water.

Over 5 million people in Pakistan remain without access to sanitation facilities. Poor WASH conditions and lack of hygiene practices contribute to the spread of infections, and make it very difficult to control the COVID-19 in Pakistan. Keeping in view this level of WASH facilities and open defecation rate, the risks posed by COVID-19 is extremely high and special focus needs to be given on provision of regular supply of water as well as improved mechanisms for sanitation and personal hygiene. Improving the WASH facilities in Pakistan is need of the hour to tackle the spread of COVID-19.

Innovative and well-coordinated policy actions by world leading economies are needed to combat this pandemic. Response to COVID-19 should take into account WASH sector, ensuring that everyone everywhere can wash their hands with soap and water.

In order to contain the spread of COVID-19, public hand washing stations can be installed especially outside shops and public buildings. Lessons need to be learned from countries like Singapore, Taiwan, UK, Japan and Hong Kong for arranging public health information campaigns for promoting hand hygiene. Furthermore, the COVID-19 situation also acts as a reality check that we humans need to act together to achieve the SDGs.

Moreover, the problem is particularly difficult for the more than 1 billion people living in slums or informal settlements, where overcrowding and low water access can fuel COVID-19's spread. Lack of access to clean water affects vulnerability to disease and ill health. So, people with the least access to essential services like water are at high risk of catching COVID-19.

Furthermore, we have another serious problem like wastage of water. In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, average water consumption has increased. Water should be used carefully. People need to be cognisant of the fact that washing hands for 20 seconds doesn't mean wasting water for 20 seconds.



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# No face without a mask in Kalat

## Hon. Ms. Rubina Irfan

Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan and Chair of the Sub-Committee on SDG – 1 (No Poverty) of the National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs



@RubinaIrfan

It was a fine afternoon of December, 2019 when I, along with my fellow workers planned on visiting my district, Kalat, situated 90 miles away from the provincial capital – Quetta. My district, the beautiful Kalat valley covers about 6,621 km<sup>2</sup> area and I planned to target maximum houses as an out-of-control pandemic was gearing its way in.

I went door-to-door, knocking and explaining all its symptoms and precautions from afar. Distributed sanitisers and masks, urged them not to go out unnecessarily and encouraged them to work from home. The basic thing which I highlighted during this awareness campaign was to wash hands at least ten times a day and for this, I and my team were distributing alcohol-based soaps.

We ran out of masks after visiting one-third of the village hence afterwards, I started collecting funds to get more masks, soaps, sanitisers, PPEs and testing kits. But unfortunately, that was not enough.

In early January, we realised that our basic focus should be on constructing a hospital solely dedicated to treat COVID-19 patients. With the immense hard work and support of the government of Balochistan, we were able to construct a hospital consisting of 50 beds, a special ward for Corona patients, a special mother and child unit, 2 ambulances and Doctors' homes.

Few days after its inauguration, a woman came over to my house and requested to meet me. A woman named Khanzaadi, walked in with her little handicrafts, very delicately embroidered and sewed. Ready to give all of them to me and all she wanted in return were a few soaps.

That day, I realised the significance of my word. People listen to their representatives. That day, I planned to resume my door-to-door campaign and asked Khanzaadi to sew masks for me which I could distribute in my district. I gave her the cloth and a sewing machine.



A few days after, I went to visit my friend – Khanzaadi and collect the sewed masks from her. Her glowing face and beautiful hazel eyes caught my attention and forced me to inquire about the facial cream she has been using or the herb she has been drinking. To which she replied “just the soaps you gave. I have been using it quite regularly. In fact, many a times day.”

That day, I realised the people of my district are keeping themselves clean and it is due to Khanzaadi's hard work that there is no face in my district that is unmasked. We distributed all of her masks, covering all the district's area and the process is still ongoing.

It is only a matter of little push and sweet words of encouragement which can help you go places. I took out the best of my locality and cultivated it into something helpful yet fascinating which resulted into my success story.

I hope we are able to utilise our local resources and fight back this global pandemic.

# Har Ghar School Initiative For Children During School Closures



## Hon. Mrs. Mehnaz Akber Aziz

Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan and Chair of the Sub-Committee on Child Rights of the National Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs



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According to a United Nations report, 'COVID-19 and Human Development: Assessing the Crisis, Envisioning the Recovery: Assessing the impact, envisioning the recovery' drop in human development is expected to be higher in developing countries as their ability to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic's social and economic fallout is less than the developed nations. The pandemic is hitting hard all of human development's constitutive elements - income, health and education.

The already fragile health systems in the developing countries are overburdened with the increased number of COVID patients pouring in daily in large numbers with little room for routine outdoor patients. Only one doctor is available to treat 1,073 people with one bed available per 1,600 people.

Hand washing practices have never been more important but for many children basic water sanitation facilities remain out of reach. Globally 40% of the population - three million people - still lacks basic hand washing facilities with soap and water at home. In Pakistan, which is already water stressed, an estimated 70% of households still drink bacterial contaminated water. How can we expect provision of clean water for washing hands in such a situation? In addition to this, two in five people don't have a decent toilet.

Lockdowns and social distancing have resulted in temporary closure of big and small industries which turned into massive joblessness. According to the World Health Organisation these steps could push as many as 60 million people across the globe into extreme poverty erasing much of the recent progress made in poverty alleviation.



In Pakistan 25% of people are living beyond the poverty line with approximately 19 million children below 14 years of age working as child laborers.

Education institutions are a place of learning and social interaction for children. If we look at education - the important constituent element of human development, the closure of education institutions across the globe in response to pandemic caused by COVID-19 has made an entire generation suffer damage to their learning and potential. Education and learning experiences for millions of children around the world have changed. 190 countries around the world including Pakistan have temporarily closed educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities) in an attempt to contain the spread of pandemic meaning impacting 1.5 billion learners worldwide or 91% of the world's student population.



The closure of educational institutes carries a high social and economic cost. The students of elite and low-cost private sector institutes - be it primary or elementary classes, college or university switched to online learning to avoid further wastage of time. The most to suffer in such a situation are disadvantaged boys and girls and their families. Schools provide essential learning and due to their closure children and youth are deprived of opportunities for growth and development.

It is important that during this time to keep children of all ages engaged daily with a range of learning and educational activities to enrich mental stimulation. Many parents struggle to help in the learning of their children at home. This becomes a more severe problem especially when parents have limited education or no resources at hand. In a country like Pakistan, which has the world's second highest number of Out of School Children (OOSC) with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 years not attending school, representing 44 % of the total population in this age group. It is important to engage these children too in stress reduction activities that are within their means.

This is natural that children look up to adults and especially to parents in the present scenario for guidance and support. Researchers report that parent participation in their children's learning activities enhances a child's self esteem and helps in improving their academic achievement. The COVID-19 lockdown is an opportunity for parents to work closely with their children and understand them previously not possible when they were busy with their jobs in normal times.

Multiple mediums can be used in order to approach parents to help and assist in the learning of their children at their homes. This can be achieved by assisting children's learning through tools like mobiles and radios etc., which are more readily available to the marginalized families.

In such a situation there is a need for a school in every household in the marginalised areas. "Har Ghar School" is an innovative solution applying various approaches to provide to families a wide range of activities, games, manipulative e.g Patten Blocks, Wooden Blocks, Geo Board, Cuisenaire rods, 100 chart and other resources to work with children. During the COVID-19 crises a lot of good online learning resources has been developed by organisations working to keep children busy during the lockdown with activities good for the holistic development of children.

Through this initiative, families and children can also be sensitized on preventive measures to keep themselves safe from COVID-19 pandemic e.g. frequent washing of hands for 20 seconds, use of hand sanitizer, covering of nose and mouth with tissue or flex elbow while sneezing. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) education for children would be an important part of this initiative.

At one end, the learning resources related to curriculum could be uploaded on multiple mediums like (YouTube, WhatsApp, Zoom application and others) and on the other end community volunteers can connect with the parents to provide them with a low cost kit so that children have a wide range of resources to work that is linked to their syllabus. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) education for children would be an important part of this initiative. Corporate sector through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can support in reaching out to these children and families including children with disabilities and refugee children so that they are not left behind in learning.



# Prisoners in the Pandemic

The spread of COVID-19 has caused havoc across the globe. COVID-19 is transmitted through human-to-human contact and there is a high risk of frequent transmission via droplets carried through sneezing or coughing. In the current situation, prisoners in particular are at risk and are vulnerable to the rapid spread of the novel coronavirus. Most prisons have limited healthcare and are over saturated. Prisoners in overpopulated jails are exceptionally vulnerable and are at a risk of being infected due to their living conditions. The lack of social distancing in prisons allows the disease to spread easily and rapidly.

Pakistan has one of the largest prison populations in the world, totalling over 77,275 prisoners.<sup>1</sup> This includes juveniles, mentally ill, physically disabled and elderly prisoners. There is an excess of prisoners throughout regions in Pakistan, occupancy of central and district jails exceeds prison capacity which will only lead to a rapid spread inside jails.

On the 18th of March 2020, a prisoner in Lahore's Camp Jail was tested positive and by April 7th 2020, 150 additional inmates had contracted the novel COVID-19. It has been stated that health departments' officials are monitoring the situations and the conditions of the patients on a daily basis.<sup>2</sup> Certain steps were taken to curb the spread of the virus. Specific provisions were introduced immediately banning entry in jails and prohibiting any external visitors. The local prisons staff was restricted to stay within to hinder the spread in the jail's vicinity.



## Hon. Ms. Ayesha Bano

Member of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. She is a member of Provincial Task Force on SDGs.



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## Ms. Sadaf Azam

Barrister

<sup>1</sup> Federal Ombudsman Secretariat, Fourth Implementation Report in Suo Moto Case No. 01  
<sup>2</sup> Amir Rauf Khawaja – Lahore Jail Authority

Work is currently being done to reduce the number of prisoners to ensure unnecessary prisoners are released in the current pandemic.

Vulnerability of the prison population presents a high risk in a situation of outbreaks and communicable diseases. People in detention facilities and their numbers need to be carefully reduced to avoid an explosive spread of the virus in such closed and overcrowded settings. Lowering the number of people in detention facilities is a key way to lower the risk of health consequences arising for people in prison including prison staff in such emergency situations.

Not releasing children, elderly, mentally ill, physically disabled accused or convicted prisoners in times of global health emergencies like COVID-19 and keeping them in jails with potentially other infected prisoners, puts their life and well-being at risk and therefore constitutes a direct violation of Pakistan's international human rights and constitutional obligations.

Elderly prisoners represent the most vulnerable section of Pakistan's prison population. There are currently 1,500 prisoners who are above the age of 60 in Pakistan's prisons.<sup>3</sup>

According to the fourth implementation report by the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat in 2016, there are a total of 1,204 female prisoners in Pakistan. According to the report by the commission constituted by IHC, there are 83 mothers with 90 children in Punjab and 37 mothers with 50 children in KPK. Women with children represent a vulnerable section of Pakistan's prison population and should be considered for immediate release with the rise of COVID-19 cases.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Report by Commission constituted by the Islamabad High Court

<sup>4</sup> 2020\_04\_20\_PUB Policy Recommendations: Safeguards for Pakistani Prisoners during COVID- 19 - JPP

There is a pressing need for the Federal and the Provincial Governments to consider releasing elderly prisoners due to their compromised immune systems as they are at a greater risk of serious complications arising from COVID-19. The Federal and Provincial Governments should also specifically consider immediately releasing all under trial juveniles on personal surety; releasing all juvenile convicts not convicted for heinous offences on personal surety, releasing those juvenile convicts from jails convicted for heinous offences and giving them under the custody of a suitable person.

There are several tools available which can be used in order to release prisoners:

- Where possible, the Provincial Governments may commute the punishment under Section 54 and 55 of the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860; and/ or request the President of Pakistan under Article 45 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan to grant pardon, reprieve and respite, and to remit, suspend or commute any sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority.
- Article 25 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan authorises the state to make special provisions for the protection of women and children. The best interests of the mother and the child during detention need to be catered to by making special provisions for their protection during incarceration.
- Section 401 of the CrPC grants the Federal and Provincial Governments to suspend sentence or remit part of the whole of any punishment at any time without any conditions. However, it is not exercised as frequently as it should be and it can be a particularly useful tool for the protection of mothers with infants or minors, especially breastfeeding mothers.

## Developments and Achievements in 2020

### Child Rights Special Committee Consultation on Online Child Safety

Given the growing concerns about child exploitation in Pakistan and increasing number of child abuse cases coming to the light, the SDGs Secretariat arranged a consultation meeting with Parliamentarians on 'Online Child Safety' in collaboration with the Facebook Asia-Pacific HQ team on March 03, 2020.

The meeting was chaired by Convener Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs Hon. MNA Riaz Khan Fatyana and was attended by Members of the Task Force, and Dr. Rubina the newly appointed Child Rights Commissioner.



<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, 'A Safer Internet' - <https://www.unicef.org/endviolence/endviolenceonline/>





## Multi-stakeholder Consultation of Sub-Group SDG-8 (Economic Growth)

The Sub-Group on SDG 8 – Decent Work & Economic Growth of the National Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, productive employment and decent work for all.

In this regard, a consultation was held on February 13, 2020 to formally involve stakeholders from the government and private sector. The focus of the meeting was the introduction of a process of carrying out a legislative review of the existing laws, bills and amendments related to SDG-8. Furthermore, it was decided to develop a roadmap for partnering on the subject with relevant custodian ministries, government programs and prospective partners. Hon. Ms. Sajida Zulfiqar MNA chairs the Sub-Group.



## Consolidation of Child Rights Laws (Federal)

One of the mandated tasks assigned to the SDGs Task Force Special-Committee on Child Rights (CR) are to work on a legislative review aimed at identifying gaps in legislation and prioritisation of the actions for every child to realise their rights. In collaboration with UNICEF, the Special-Committee completed a legislative review of child related laws.

It was observed that most laws in Pakistan focus on prohibition of certain anti-child practices. Very few laws provided state guarantees for the provision of free services to fulfil basic needs of the child - crucial for their balanced and holistic development like nutrition, medical services, and early childhood care and education (ECCE).

It was felt that a comprehensive and inclusive legislative framework relating to child rights is missing. Legal inconsistencies, overlaps and gaps were identified. In January 2020 the CR Special-Committee, alongside the Standing Committee on Law and Justice in a meeting was tasked to draw together different enactments on similar topics into a single Act. The new legislative instrument would address lacunas, and replace provisions in different Acts passed over the years. Chairperson CR Special-Committee Hon. MNA Mehnaz Aziz Akber is leading the process.

## Meeting of Sub-Group on SDG-5 (Gender Equality)

The Sub-group of the SDGs Parliamentary Taskforce on Gender Equality (SDG-5) organised a Stakeholders Consultation on March 10, 2020 at SDGs Secretariat. The consultation aimed at working on strengthening oversight of gender sensitive legislations and policy and to create linkages with institutions working on Gender Issue.

The Members of SDGs Parliamentary Task Force and senior officials from the National & Provincial Commissions on Status of Women from ICT, KPK and Punjab attended the meeting. Hon. MNA Shandana Gulzar Khan chairs the Sub-group of SDG-5. The Parliamentary Group provides an opportunity for partnerships across the board to ensure effective coordination amongst all bodies working on SDG-5.

The meeting included detailed presentations by the representatives of various organisations including Federal and Provincial National Commissions on the Status of Women (NCSW) and UN Women. A work plan is being developed in this regard.





## Mental Health Summit 2020

The Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs hosted a Parliamentary Mental Health Summit on March 12, 2020 at the Presidency in collaboration with Pakistan Institute of Living and Learning and The University of Manchester.

The aim of the Summit was to learn and share experiences to bring about a legislative intervention for the protection and promotion of mental health education across the country. Convener of the Parliamentary Task Force Hon. Mr. Riaz Fatyana MNA, Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Institute of Living and Learning Professor Nasim Chaudhry and Mayor of Karachi Wasim Akhtar besides experts and academicians from the UK, Canada and from across Pakistan, attended the event.



Hon. President Dr Arif Alvi in his inaugural address stressed for changes in the lifestyle and setting up of modern facilities to address the growing mental health issues in the country, which had already affected up to 16 percent of the country's population. Hon. President said sleeplessness and lack of exercise could lead to mental stress as sleep helps to wipe out unnecessary thoughts which otherwise burden the mind.

The president also called for the media's role to educate the masses on mental health through awareness drives and dramas discussing the illness. He strongly called for introducing a mechanism where the traumatised patients could contact to seek any remedy from experts, instead of committing suicide.





# Virtual meetings during COVID-19 Lockdown

## Meeting on Scorecards Development:

Virtual Meeting of Sub-Group on SDGs Scorecards Development was organized on April 29, 2020.

Hon. Ms. Ayesha Ghaus Pasha MNA chaired the meeting. The meeting was attended by Hon. Ms. Ghazala Saifi MNA, Hon. Ms. Kanwal Shauzab, Hon. Ms. Shandana Gulzar MNA, & Hon. Dr. Shazia Sobia MNA. The other participants included experts- Ms. Naveeda Nazir, Mr. Minhaj ul Haque, Ms. Shirin Gul, Ms. Samra Hanif and Mr. Zeeshan Zafar besides SDGs team members.

Hon. Dr. Ayesha Ghaus Pasha MNA in her welcome remarks said the development of SDGs Score Card aims to serve as a tool to monitor the overall developmental framework of Pakistan.

The strategic intent she said is to develop district-wise, comparable data scorecards for each priority SDG target. This includes health, education, environment and related goals.

Hon. Dr. Aisha said that to achieve this great milestone, we are building partnerships with the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, research organisations, UN bodies and other stakeholders in the development sector. She said together we plan to utilise resources effectively and generate comprehensive data scorecards for all districts and 273 constituencies of Pakistan.

Mr. Hassan Hakeem briefed the participants about the progress made so far. He shared that with the support of UNDP, a stock-take exercise is underway to map data sources of all unique 231 SDG indicators based on their reporting levels (district, provincial, national). All the honourable members gave their input during the discussion. The participants agreed that a detailed discussion on the proposed survey would be held soon.

## Roundtable Discussion on “Women & Children during COVID-19 Pandemic: Parliamentary Solutions”

A virtual roundtable discussion on “Women & Children during COVID-19 Pandemic: Parliamentary Solutions” was organised by National Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs in collaboration with the Parliamentarians Commission on Human Rights (PCHR) on May 21, 2020 in Islamabad. MNA Hon. Ms. Shandana Gulzar Khan, Chairperson Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) & Convener Sub Committee SDGs-5 (Gender Equality) & MNA Hon. Ms. Mehnaz Akber Aziz, Convener Special Committee on Child Rights of the SDGs Task Force chaired the meeting.

Mr. Shafique Chaudhary, Executive Director (PCHR) moderated the meeting.

The other participants included MNA Hon. Dr. Sobia Somroo, MNA Hon. Ms. Syma Nadeem, MNA Hon. Ms. Romeena Khursheed Alam, MNA Hon. Mr. Kesoo Mal Kheal Das. Former Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Advisor on Commission of Children & Transgender, Ms. Viqar-un-Nisa Hashmi, Consultant Ms. Naheed Aziz was also present. Heads of Civil Society Organisations Group Development Pakistan, Sahil, Rozan, SCSPEB Balochistan and Alif Laila Book Bus Society, Beacon House School Systems & Peace & Justice system also actively participated in the debate.

The purpose of the virtual meeting was to hold a discussion on the most vulnerable sections of the society that are children and women as there were no guidelines from the government for them. The meeting aimed to highlight the role of Parliament on policies and reforms and since the budget was to be announced what should be done for this vulnerable section. The stakeholders also discussed challenges faced by women & children & proposed interventions.

Chairperson Special Committee on Child Rights MNA Hon. Mrs. Mehnaz Akber Aziz and Chairperson Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and Convener Sub-Committee on SDGs -5 MNA Hon. Ms. Shandana Gulzar Khan welcomed the participants and set the tone for discussion. The meeting started with a presentation in which the state of children and women in pre and post COVID-19 scenarios was discussed and a way forward was suggested. The presentation was followed by an interesting discussion.

## Roundtable Discussion on “Child Sensitive Budgeting & Role of Parliament”

Special Committee on Child Rights of the Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs in collaboration with UNICEF Pakistan organized a round table discussion on ‘Child Sensitive Budgeting & Role of Parliamentary Taskforce’. The meeting was presided over by Chairperson of the Special Committee on Child Rights of the Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs MNA Hon Ms. Mehnaz Akber Aziz.

The Speakers of the round table included MNA & Parliamentary Secretary For Finance Hon. Mr. Zain Qureshi, from UNICEF Dr. Abdul Alim Regional Advisor for Social Policy UNICEF, Mr. Luis Gorjon head of Social Policy Unit UNICEF Pakistan. The other speakers were, Economist & former Chairman BISP Dr. Kaiser Bengali, Special Advisor to Chief Minister Sindh on Social Protection Mr. Haris Gazder, Head of DFID in Pakistan Ms. Annabel Gerry, Associate Dean & Associate Professor LUMS School of Education Dr. Mariam Chughtai and Ms. Rabia Tabbasum from SDPI. MNA Hon. Mr. Mohsin Nawaz Ranjha gave a brief appearance on the occasion.

The purpose of the meeting was to generate a Parliamentary discourse on Child Friendly Budgeting.

Hon. Member in her welcome note said the lockdowns during the pandemic have crippled the lives of many. According to new World Bank forecast it will push many poor children to child labor to support the family. She said if we do the analysis of the previous years allocation of the budget, total allocation for children specific programs has remained around 0.74% of the total public expenditure of the Federal government in 2017-18 and less than 1.8 % of GDP during the last four years. She said there is a need to hold such meetings & sessions frequently to mainstream important issues. Hon. member called for a strong need to develop synergies with the government.

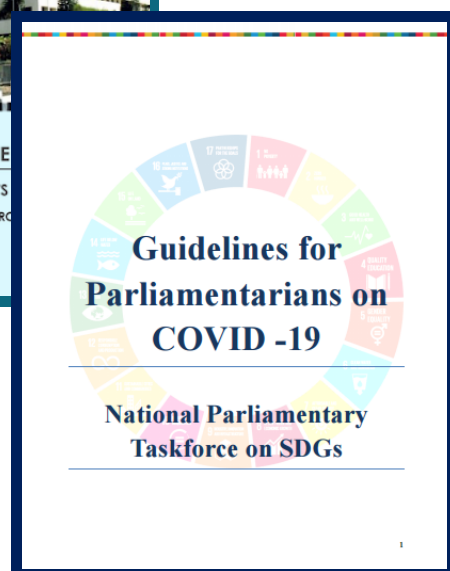
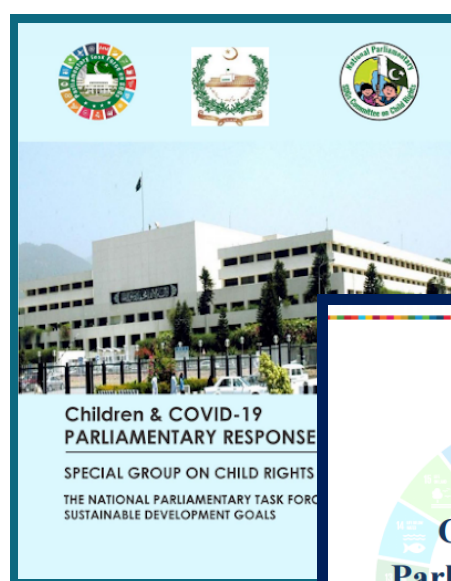
Parliamentary Secretary for Finance Hon. MNA Mr. Zain Qureshi joined the roundtable for a brief period and highlighted some important aspects of the budget document to reflect on the government's intent to invest in health care in general & mother's care in particular. The other speakers appreciated the holding of the meeting and said there is no focus on children and women and such discussions on on-going basis are a reminder that there are implications of the budgetary process and budgetary outcomes for different segments of the population. Significance of data in planning of strategies was emphasized.

## Children & COVID-19 Parliamentary Response & Guidelines for Parliamentarians on COVID-19:

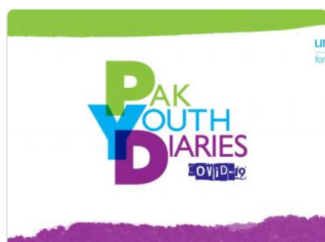
SDGs Secretariat produced two documents on COVID – 19. One was 'Guidelines for Parliamentarians on COVID-19' compiled and produced under the supervision of Chairperson Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs Hon. MNA Mr. Riaz Fatyana.

The other one was '**Children & COVID 19- Parliamentary Response**' compiled by the Special Committee on Child Rights under the supervision of Hon. MNA Mrs. Mehnaz Akber Aziz who is also convener of the committee.

These documents are based on four principles: monitoring & oversight, coordination efforts at constituency level, advocacy and awareness and inclusivity of all. Parliamentarians, the documents say, play an play a key role in bridging society with the Executive and they can play vital roles in their respective constituencies ensuring that social discipline is followed to stop the spread of the disease. The documents have been shared with the Honorable members, government officials and civil society organizations







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## Videos - Pak Youth Diaries (COVID-19)

Adolescents and youth talk about their life during the lockdown

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## How to protect your family's mental health during COVID-19

A conversation with adolescent psychology expert Dr. Lisa Damour.

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Safety measures for mothers who are breastfeeding and complementary feeding their infants during the pandemic

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## 'Call 1166': The COVID-19 helpline centre in Pakistan

Creating a vital support system during a difficult time.

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## Periods in pandemics

Discussion with Pakistani female sports champions regarding the menstrual hygiene related challenges faced by young girls and women during COVID-19

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# The impact of COVID-19 - Facts and Statistics

## Health:

- Almost a quarter of the world's unimmunised or partially immunised children—about 4.5 million children—live in South Asia. Almost all of them, or 97 per cent, live in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan - **UNICEF Report**
- Pakistan, one of only three countries where polio is still endemic, has recorded 47 wild poliovirus cases this year as of mid-May – more than double the number recorded at the same point last year - **Media Reports**
- In April almost 40 million children missed their Polio drops after cancellation of the Nationwide vaccination campaign - **Media reports**
- Five million births to take place in Pakistan in nine months since COVID-19 – **UNICEF report**
- Pakistan is among 10 countries where death from preventable diseases in children under 5 could rise by almost 45% over the next six months, due to diversion of scarce health resources to combat corona virus pandemic- **The Lancet Global Health Report 2020**
- 40 percent of the world's population is not able to wash their hands with soap and water at home. Hand-washing with soap is critical in the fight against the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In total, only 3 out of 5 people worldwide have basic hand washing facilities - **UNICEF report**
- Pakistan spends less than 1% of GDP on health services, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's 2019 report, while the WHO recommends an allocation of 6%.



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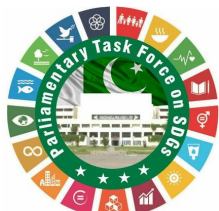


## Economy:

- According to a survey, the number of street children in Pakistan has reached 1.2 million.
- According to a survey conducted by the Federal Bureau of Statistics and the National Child Labour, approximately 19 million children below 14 years of age are working as child laborers in Pakistan.
- More than 18 million Pakistanis have become jobless due to steps taken to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- According to World Bank forecasts, the global economy will shrink by 5.2% this year amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This decline may push 70 million to 100 million people into extreme poverty. It would be the fourth-deepest recession of the past 150 years after 1914, 1930-32 and 1945-46.

## Education:

- Young and adolescent girls are twice as likely to be out of school in crisis situations and face greater barriers to education and vulnerabilities such as domestic/gender-based violence when not in school.
- Pakistan at 76th out of 100 countries in terms of availability, affordability and people's ability to use the web.
- 190 countries around the world, including Pakistan, have temporarily closed educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities) in an attempt to halt and contain the spread of pandemic. Learning of 1.6 billion students worldwide impacted including Pakistan.



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