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COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN FATA KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

PESHAWAR: Speakers at a teachers training programme said on Sunday that empowerment of individuals and communities would help to create an environment for sustainable development in the conflict-affected areas of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata). They held the collaboration between governments, international, national and community organizations vital for promoting sustainable development practices in the conflict zones of Fata and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

An initiative of UNESCO the six-day training programme involves a group of 70 Fata teachers, over half of them female, who would be imparted knowledge about topics, including informal education, gender equality, education for sustainable development, conflict resolution, human rights, and social justice.

“As Pakistan has experienced natural calamities, including floods and earthquakes since 2005, the subject of disaster risk reduction needs to be focused to promote sustainable development among teachers in an effort to sensitize the future generations,” Dr S.K. Kamrani, an Islamabad-based UNESCO representative, said at the workshop, underlining the significance of promoting risk mitigation practices to ensure sustainable development in conflict-hit areas.

He said that linkage between education for sustainable development and the role of teachers is needed to be highlighted to mitigate risks to vulnerable communities. Organized at Peshawar’s South Asian Centre for International and Regional Studies as part of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Development 2004-15, the training programme involves teachers of primary and secondary schools from Landi Kotal, Jamrud and Frontier Regions adjoining Peshawar.

The regional studies centre’s chairman, Dr Rashid Chughtai, said that teachers from the conflict zones would be acquainted with modern techniques and imparted knowledge for sustainable development to be better placed to educate their students and promote risk reduction practices in the affected areas. “We want to revolutionize teaching, training and facilitating techniques in our region. Modern tools and methods of teaching must not be limited to settled areas only,” said Dr Chughtai.

The participants would also be given training material, including a teachers’ training manual and resource books on disaster risk reduction and natural calamity mitigation. Speaking on the occasion, trainer Dr Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi said that the workshop was aimed at infusing spirit in the community behavior at times of conflict and disasters, raising awareness at individual level about self responsibilities and responses towards other community members.

As the master trainers, he added, would transfer the knowledge to their students and fellow teachers, the programme would help to change human responses to natural disasters in Fata and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.