

## **Education has huge potential to facilitate progress towards SDGs: GEM Report 2016**

**ISLAMABAD:** The first in a fifteen years' series, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2016 has revealed that education has a huge potential to facilitate progress towards all the global sustainable development goals, but needs a major rethink if it is to live up to those expectations.

UNESCO Islamabad unveiled the 2016 GEM Report in collaboration with UNICEF and other UN partners. This year's Report is entitled "Education for People and Planet: Creating Sustainable Future for All" and is following the global launch on 6th September 2016 at UNESCO HQ in Paris. After welcome remarks of Ms. Angela Kearney, UNICEF Representative to Pakistan, Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan presented the 2016 GEM Report to Muhammad Balighur-Rehman, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training for its formal launch. Officially mandated to monitor the new global education goal in the UN Sustainable Development Agenda until 2030, the GEM is an editorially independent, authoritative, and evidence-based annual report to assess progress towards the education targets in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. The Report is being launched at a time when UNESCO and other UN partners in collaboration with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training are working with all provincial and area governments in preparing a national strategy for implementation of the SDG-4 agenda in Pakistan.

Pakistan is home to 9% (24 million) of the world's 263 million out of school children, adolescents and youth, which is a serious challenge to the country. The report stipulates that on current trends, universal primary education in Southern Asia will be achieved in 2051; universal lower secondary completion in 2062; and universal upper secondary completion in 2087. This means that the region would be more than half a century late for the 2030 SDG deadline. In Pakistan, by 2030, one in ten children will still not be completing primary school, whilst the country is expected to achieve universal primary education in 2060, universal lower secondary education in 2070 and universal upper secondary education not until 2095. While in the majority of countries, education is the best indicator of climate change awareness, half of countries' curricula worldwide, including Pakistan's, do not explicitly mention climate change in their content.

To address these issues, the GEM Report suggests to break with past trends to avoid the world being half a century late in achieving its global education commitments. The Education systems must provide people vital skills and knowledge that can find new solutions for environmental problems. Education systems need to nurture higher level skills to fulfill the needs of growing economies where jobs are being fast automated. This calls for the national governments to focus on removing inequalities in education, which can cause frustration and increase the risk of conflict and violence.

Presenting the key findings of the GEM Report, Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan highlighted that the GEM Report looks at the multiple links and synergies between education in relation to SDG-4 and other sectors, such as health, nutrition, poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, environment, climate change and peace and security etc. While stressing

the centrality of SDG-4 in the overall 2030 Agenda, she said that all sectors must view education as a partner in their plans for change, and work together in global, regional and national partnership. Ms. Angela Kearney, UNICEF Representative to Pakistan in her remarks expressed that this year's GEM Report is very important which demonstrates about the progress in education which critical for all Sustainable Development Goals. The development sectors need to include education in their policies and plans. She pointed out that the GEM Report calls for much greater financing to achieve the education goals. UNICEF will continue its work through a holistic and cross-sectoral method for the progress of all children. UNICEF's work will promote early childhood programs which include nutrition, stimulation and protection; ensuring that children in places as far removed as FATA and remote Balochistan can thrive in safe and protective environments critical to their development needs.

Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training highlighted that the 2016 GEM Report has got a new directive to review the progress of education under the 2030 Agenda. The Report not only looks into the education sector but also focuses on the relationship of education and other sustainable developments goals. And for that the Government of Pakistan has already adopted SDG-4 and has converted it into our national development goals, education has always been our first priority and we are fully committed towards it.

WFP Pakistan acting Country Director, Stephen Gluning said that "no single organization and no single government can act alone to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. By working together with commitment and determination, we can establish powerful partnerships that can change the global landscape, from one of hunger to hope, country-by-country, community-by-community, family-by-family and child-by-child, until no one is left behind", he added that "securing high level leadership, ensuring context-specific and country-led partnerships, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and focusing on financing, results and accountability are the key factors for the development of effective partnerships. The World Food Programme (WFP) together with other UN agencies and partners is supporting the Government of Pakistan to achieve food security, nutrition, education gender equality and manage climate impact in Pakistan".

Speaking in the panel, Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, UNHCR Representative to Pakistan said, "Provision of education to refugee children is directly linked to development and sustainability".

Among others, Syed Abu Ahmed Akif, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change, UNICEF Representative to Pakistan, Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training also expressed their views on the importance of the GEM Report while emphasising the need for partnership and collaboration across sectors to achieve SDGs. A panel discussion was also held to deliberate upon the six thematic areas of the GEM report. A wide range of representatives from government, development partner agencies, civil society, academia, and media marked the launching ceremony of the 2016 GEM Report

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