



PRESS RELEASE

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Launching of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2019 *Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls*

Islamabad: Following the global launch on 20th November 2018 in Germany, the 2019 GEM Report was launched in Islamabad on 22 November 2018 at Serena Hotel Islamabad. UNESCO Islamabad Office in collaboration with UNHCR hosted the launching ceremony, which was well attended by a wide range of stakeholders from education sector, development partners, media and civil society organisations. The theme of this year's GEM report is ***“Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls”***

The third in the series, the GEM Report provides its assessment of the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal on Education (SDG-4) and its targets. The 2019 Report elucidates the relationship between migration, displacement and education and presents evidence on the scale and characteristics of different types of migration and displacement and their implications on education and vice versa.

While education opportunities often serve as a major driver in the decision to migrate, the complex process of migration or displacement can also interrupt education. Pakistan is hosting 1.4 million registered Afghanistan refugees in the country. The constitutional amendment in 2010 guarantees the right to free, compulsory education for all children aged 5 to 16. Most of registered refugee children have access to both formal and non-formal education facilities in the country. Special provisions are also available for students in professional colleges and universities. Yet there are issues in access and quality of education for refugee children, especially girls, which are being addressed by the federal and provincial government authorities.

Talking at the occasion, Mr. Shafqat Mahmood, Federal Minister, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training highlighted the importance of 2019 GEM report. He said that the report is an important contribution of UNESCO for a broader understanding of migration and displacement issues, both nationally and globally and their effect on education. He shared that the Government of Pakistan has instituted a well-coordinated mechanism for the return of the temporarily dislocated people in the country and most of them have returned to their native areas. Highlighting the Government's education sector reforms, he shared that a task force on education has been formed to propose concrete solutions to the problem of out of schoolchildren, uniformity in education, quality education and skill development.

During the presentation of the key findings of the 2019 GEM report, Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan highlighted that the Report is an essential reference for policy-makers to understand both positive and negative effects of migration and displacement on education systems. She highlighted the importance of a cross-sectoral coordination and planning mechanism to meet the challenges of financing education for migrants and refugees. The report calls on governments to address the education needs of migrants and displaced populations with the same attention they give to host population by protecting their rights, making national systems more inclusive and building institutional capacity for the same.

UNHCR Representative in Pakistan, Ms. Ruvendrini Menikdiwela praised the government's efforts to provide refugee children with access to education through inclusion in government schools. She added that 40 per cent of Afghan refugee children are attending Pakistani schools.

"Amid its internal education challenges, Pakistan has maintained its generous education policy for refugees which is indeed a great investment in peace, prosperity and sustainable development in both Afghanistan and Pakistan," Menikdiwela said.

Ms. Menikdiwela added that the generous education policy is a reflection of Pakistan's commitment to support the Sustainable Development Goal on Education (SDG-4) and the law in Pakistan Article 25-A which stipulates free and compulsory education for all children.

Menikdiwela said through the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) programme, UNHCR is improving the existing educational facilities close to refugee villages to benefit both local refugee communities.

Ms. Menikdiwela called upon the provincial governments to include refugees in the education sector plans to ensure that refugee children's needs are incorporated in the planning and budgeting process.

In his closing remarks, the UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Neil Buhne shared that the report provides valuable insights in order to inform policy makers of different approaches to address migration and displacement issues being used in different context, their benefits and disadvantages. He empathised the need to ensure its maximum use, particularly for upstream policy and research related work in Pakistan.

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