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PRESS RELEASE

18.11.2016 - UNESCOPRESS/ISB

UNESCO is assisting Pakistan to mitigate flood hazards, reduce soil erosion and control water losses for improved high value crops productions

Islamabad / Chakwal: Around 16Mha of land (20% of total area of Pakistan) is affected directly or indirectly by soil erosion (wind & water). Out of this, 11.2 Mha is affected by water erosion only. Due to many reasons including high intensity, short duration rainfalls and lack of awareness among professionals and farmers in the field of watershed management and rainwater harvesting techniques, a huge amount of rainwater is being lost annually as surface runoff from Pothowar region. This is not only the loss of water but also results in loss of fertile topsoil that may increase flood severity in lowland areas and silting in dams, rivers and ponds etc. thereby decreasing their storage capacity.

To further improve the technical capabilities, UNESCO Islamabad under its phase-II "**Strategic Strengthening of Flood Warning and Management Capacity of Pakistan**" is imparting **"Community Based Training Programme on Watershed Management for Flood and Drought Control"** to farmers and relevant Government and Semi Government professionals from Agriculture Extension, Soil Conservation, Water Management, NGOs and academia in district Chakwal, Punjab.

On day first of the training session, key experts gave brief history to participants on flood in Pakistan, echo hydrology approach for addressing flood and drought, onsite training on rainwater harvesting techniques and drip/bubbler irrigation system and field visit to water saving techniques at Barani Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and Soil and Water Conservation Research Institute (SAWCRI). On day second, participants were taken to the farmer sites for onsite soil conservation activities, rainwater harvesting techniques and high efficiency irrigation system at PEL farm, Kallar Kahar and Murid respectively. The farmers also visited on site to see the effect of gypsum application on soil moisture retention and crop yield.

Speaking at the concluding session of the training, Ms. Vibeke Jensen, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan mentioned that after successful completion of this training, participants have now acquired knowledge of watershed management approaches which will result in reduced soil erosion through reduction in water runoff and improved storage of rainwater, hence mitigating flood hazard. Participants also learned practical utilization of stored rainwater through efficient means to grow high value crops for improving livelihood of farmers and poverty alleviation.

Dr. Muhammad Tariq in his vote of thanks extended his gratitude to UNESCO and mentioned the active participation from NGOs, professional and progressive farmers, which made this training workshop successful. He particularly appreciated the participation of women from farming community and from NGOs. At the end he congratulated the resource persons, Dr. Abid Subhani, Dr. Riffat Bibi, Mr. Shaid Munir, Engr. Marjan Aziz, Dr. Kamran and Ms. Safia Naureen Malik for awarding training on various components of the three day training session.

UNESCO had successfully completed phase-1 of the "**Strategic Strengthening of Flood Warning and Management Capacity of Pakistan**" which led to the establishment of the first ever flood forecasting model of the Upper Indus catchment – Indus Integrated Flood Analysis System (Indus-IFAS), new capability for flood hazard warning in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province for the Kabul River Basins, hazard mapping techniques for Lower Indus river and capacity development of Pakistan Meteorological Department, SUPARCO and other relevant

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government agencies. While Phase - II of the project is aimed to continue the capacity development of relevant Pakistan agencies (Federal, Provincial Irrigation Departments, and so forth) regarding flood management, especially forecasting, warning and hazard analysis and also to strengthen the human resource development in Pakistan through the project activities, which lead to establishing technical foundation in the country for the sustainable self-development and self-advancement of the flood forecasting and early warning system as well as the effective coordination and management during floods.

Media Contact:

Riaz Karim Khan, Programme Officer (CI), UNESCO Islamabad, r.khan@unesco.org,
+ 92 (0) 345 5858 956

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