

Informal Summary
2011 High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council
Annual Ministerial Review
Pakistan National Voluntary Presentation
10:00 am – 11:00 am
6 July 2011, Geneva

The National Voluntary Presentation session was chaired by **H.E. Mr. Lazarous Kapambwe**, President of the Economic and Social Council. The moderator for the session was **Ms. Carol Bellamy**, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI).

Dr. Nafisa Shah, Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan, delivered the national voluntary presentation for Pakistan and started by underscoring that Pakistan is committed to promoting education in spite of various challenges. Turning to an overview of the key indicators on education in Pakistan, Dr. Shah reported that the adult literacy rate is 57.7 per cent, the net enrolment rate is 57 per cent, primary and the gross enrolment rate is 91 per cent - indicating that Pakistan is off target for meeting the education goals.

Dr. Shah remarked that while the education infrastructure in Pakistan is quite comprehensive multiple challenges are holding back progress towards better education. First, natural disasters in the recent history of Pakistan, in particular the earthquake in 2005 and the floods in 2010, have had severe effects on school children and school buildings. Further, regional wars and terrorism have negatively impacted Pakistan's education system as schools have been targets of attacks. Also, internal displacements have disrupted everyday life and in particular schools which often serve as safe havens in situations of emergency. In addition, Pakistan suffers from widespread poverty and the costs of dealing with natural disasters, wars and poverty strain education budgets.

Dr. Shah described that as a result of these challenges about 43 per cent of children drop out of school, 7.2 million children are out of school, 60 per cent of schools have no electricity, 34 per cent of schools have no drinking water and education quality is generally low. In addressing these issues Dr. Shah highlighted that Pakistan has undertaken policies to uphold the right to education, which is also included in the national constitution. Moreover, the national education policy adopted in 2009 has aligned national policies with the international commitments, focusing on increased enrolments, higher budgetary allocation to education, removal of urban-rural and gender imbalances, as well as improving the quality of education at all levels. The Government of Pakistan has further committed to allocating 7 per cent of GDP to education by 2015.

Some of the key policies in the national education strategy of Pakistan include the abolition of school fees, the provision of free text books to all students of public sector schools up to Secondary level and the strengthening of public private partnerships for education at the provincial and national level. Dr. Shah concluded her presentation by admitting that Pakistan is not likely to reach all MDGs related to education and the EFA goals, however, she stressed that Pakistan is prepared to take the necessary steps outlined in the national education policy to achieve better progress.

The NVP friend, the representative of **Bangladesh**, congratulated Pakistan for the comprehensive presentation and national report. The representative commented that the presentation highlighted the difficult context that developing countries face in achieving

development and that the presentation outlined the gaps in availability of resources for education. The representative concluded his intervention by requesting more information on Pakistan's progress in providing girls education and Pakistan's way of aligning labour market needs with the education system.

The delegation of **China**, another NVP friend, expressed satisfaction with the progress of Pakistan in education matters despite setbacks from events including natural disasters and the economic crisis. The delegation emphasized that they will continue supporting the educational efforts of Pakistan—including by getting the international community to cooperate with the Pakistan government, in particular in some of the areas that present the greatest challenges including drop out rates, adult illiteracy, and infrastructure. The delegation raised two questions. First, they asked the presenter to expand on the efforts of Pakistan to provide education for minorities and for the disabled. Second, they asked about the ways in which Pakistan is coordinating the policies of the provinces after the devolution of education functions.

The delegation of **Turkey**, the third NVP friend, commented on the efforts to strengthen the education sector in Pakistan. They committed to continuing to support Pakistan in the improvement of the education sector and highlighted the importance that international development partners have in this regard. The delegation of Turkey asked two questions. First, they enquired what measures were being taken by Pakistan to ensure quality education. Second, queried how could development partners help in managing Pakistan's debt burden.

The delegation of **India** praised the parliamentary efforts of Pakistan in trying to improve the education sector and also the importance given to education quality. The delegation also posed two questions. First, they asked how to coordinate and enforce compulsory education after decentralization. Second, they enquired about the education financing mechanisms that Pakistan has used.

The delegation from **Germany** asked Pakistan to expand on the lessons learned for providing education after natural disasters.

Dr. Nafisa Shah expressed thanks for the support provided by all countries and other development partners and proceeded to address the questions. With respect to girls' education, Dr. Shah mentioned that Pakistan is trying to make progress in primary education, where the coverage gaps between boys and girls were the greatest. She also mentioned that while these gaps exist in basic education, the trend reverses in higher levels of education where women have greater attainment than men. In particular, she mentioned that there are several donor supported policies that are seeking to close the coverage gap and also that several Pakistani financed initiatives are being implemented with the aim of closing the gender gap. As example, she mentioned an initiative in which the Pakistani government gives money for food support to girls that progress academically.

With respect to policies for minorities and the disabled, Dr. Shah mentioned that there are special education initiatives to support the disabled—for example, there is a special institute for the education of the disabled—and special funds to support the education of minorities, through initiatives such as conditional cash transfers to women. With respect to coordination after decentralization, Dr. Shah mentioned that it is a challenge, but so far provinces have shown efforts to improve their education systems. As examples of this, she mentioned that provinces are spending reasonably well on education, and healthy competition between provinces has emerged. She noted that coordination has also been done at ministerial level and that a new parliamentary Committee for MDGs is being created. This committee will help in coordinating the provinces' efforts after decentralization.

With respect to education quality, Dr. Shah mentioned that it is still a challenge. Nevertheless there have been efforts to foster quality, including comprehensive training programmes for teachers and teacher education centres. With respect to the debt burden, she mentioned that Pakistan has received support from development partners and that several debt swap programmes are currently being implemented.

Regarding financing, Dr. Shah informed that one way in which her country has financed education programmes lately has been through public-private partnerships and philanthropy initiatives.

Dr. Shah also shared lessons learned in providing education services after natural disasters. She mentioned that the government provided short-term education programmes in the temporary transitory camps/shelters after the flood. She noted that many of the displaced people after a disaster were also the poorest. Those people—especially children and women—for the first time, received education in temporary shelters and once they had had a taste of education and reading, it was easier to get them to attend classes in their original villages. Donor cooperation was very important for providing this assistance in the shelters, she noted.

In closing, **Ms. Carol Bellamy** highlighted the importance of documenting lessons learned, and of discussing and sharing those lessons.