

EXPERIENCE SHARING SEMINAR

RESPONDING WITH ESSENTIAL SRHR PROVISION AND NEW DELIVERY MECHANISMS (RESPOND) PROJECT 30th July 2024, Islamabad



Rahnuma-Family Planning Association of Pakistan (Rahnuma-FPAP), Member Association of international Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) organized an Experience Sharing Seminar of RESPOND Project at Islamabad on July 30, 2024. The Project in collaboration with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia was designed to develop an ecosystem of volunteers capable of responding effectively to the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) needs of vulnerable and marginalized communities, including women, children, and adolescents during disasters and emergencies. The seminar was conducted to disseminate the experiences, learnings, and innovative approaches with relevant stakeholders for addressing SRHR needs of women and girls in Pakistan. The platform generated meaningful dialogue and insightful comments by technical experts and advisors from public and private sectors enriched the strategic discourse on addressing SRHR needs of vulnerable populations.

The Chief Guest of the seminar was Mr. Neil Hawkins Australian High Commissioner Pakistan. The event was attended by honorable Ms. Raheela Durrani Minister of Education, Mr. Sardar Faisal Jamali Minister of Health from Balochistan, Mr. Saleh Muhammad Baloch Secretary Health, and Mr. Abdullah Khan Secretary PWD from Balochistan. Mr. Imdad Ali Lahani Secretary PWD KP, and Dr. Shabana Saleem DG PPW MNHSR&C graced the event. In addition, the Director Generals, and Directors of Health and Population Welfare Departments of KP, Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh attended the seminar. Dr. Sabina Durrani DG NEHS, Dr. Jamil Ahmed SRH Advisor UNFPA, Dr. Talib Lashari Technical Advisor CIP Sindh, Dr. Yasmin Sabih Qazi CEO QZ Catalyst, Dr. Aziz Rab CEO Greenstar Social Marketing, Dr. Masuma Zaidi KFW, Ms Stephanie Werner and Shoaib Tayyab from DFAT Pakistan, Mr. Faisal Nazir Marie Stopes Society, Mr. Shahzad Amir CEO Punjab Charity Commissions, and Mr. Idrees Abbasi Secretary to President AJK, among others, shared their technical inputs and appreciated the project deliverables. Representatives from GWHI, PPIF, UN Women, WHO, DKT, IRC, Pathfinder, ACT International and UNHCR etc. also contributed in the discussion.

Mr. Neil Hawkins, the Australian High Commissioner, lauded the RESPOND project's successful implementation and outcomes. He shared positive observations from his visits to project sites, noting the effective organization of medical camps and the dedication of outreach workers. He praised the enthusiastic engagement of youth and emphasized the need for sustaining such initiatives to strengthen resilient healthcare systems. Mr. Hawkins highlighted the importance of integrating sexual and reproductive health services within disaster response frameworks. He also commended Rahnuma-FPAP's efforts in addressing maternal and infant mortality, as well as its work on Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP), SRH and FP services for refugees.



Ms. Rahila Durrani, Minister for Education Balochistan, emphasized the crucial role of reproductive health and family planning services in reducing maternal mortality and securing a healthy future of the nation. She highlighted the importance of understanding cultural sensitivities and stigma associated with SRH services and advocated for learning from successful strategies to engage communities in open discussions. Ms. Durrani called for ongoing support in all areas of Pakistan especially Balochistan, and commended Rahnuma-FPAP's outreach in remote and marginalized areas.



Dr. Shabana Saleem, Director General Population Program Wing; Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination (MoNHSR&C), praised Rahnuma-FPAP's contributions to key thematic areas alongside government efforts. She emphasized the need for improved health indicators and closer collaboration with private sector including civil society organizations. Dr. Saleem highlighted the importance of culturally sensitive outreach and engaging local leaders to overcome taboos and stigma surrounding SRHR and family planning topics. She also mentioned the forthcoming PDHS report, crucial for future planning.



Mr. Raja Muhammad Razzaque, President Rahnuma-FPAP, inaugurated the seminar by extending warm welcome and underscoring the urgent need for reproductive health and family planning services, particularly during emergencies. He highlighted Pakistan's complex challenges driven by socio-cultural, economic, and political factors and called for a comprehensive strategy involving government initiatives, enhanced healthcare infrastructure, innovative service delivery models, increased public awareness, and targeted outreach to marginalized communities. Mr. Razzaque underlined Rahnuma-FPAP's efforts in providing essential services through mobile camps and trained providers. He also urged enhanced collaboration among national and international partners to strengthen effectiveness of disaster responses, acknowledging Pakistan's high climate vulnerability. He thanked and expressed his gratitude to the Australian High Commissioner and all other stakeholders for their participation in the seminar and invaluable support.



Dr. Syed Asif Hussain, Chief Executive Officer Rahnuma-FPAP, presented an overview of the organization's extensive network and strategic initiatives. He detailed Rahnuma-FPAP's achievements, including its role as a member of the IPPF and its status as one of Pakistan's largest NGO-based health infrastructures. Dr. Hussain highlighted the organization's substantial contributions to both general and humanitarian healthcare settings. He emphasized Rahnuma-FPAP's notable achievements in training, innovative service delivery, and strategic partnerships that have enhanced healthcare access, particularly during emergencies. He also advocated for the use of digital health tools and telemedicine to improve service reach and continuity for underserved populations.



Dr. Anjum Rizvi, Director Program Management Division Rahnuma-FPAP, outlined the RESPOND project's scope and achievements, detailing its reach across 18 districts in Pakistan. Dr. Rizvi emphasized the project's community-centric approach, strategic partnerships, and ongoing evaluations adapted to community needs. While sharing the project overview, she elaborated that project was aimed to enhance utilization of high-quality and equitable SRHR services among the most vulnerable populations which was implemented in 18 districts Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab, Sindh, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Along with Rahnuma-FPAP Local Governments, Departments of Health, NGOs, and International Development/ Donor Agencies were the main implementation partners. She concluded her session with a showcasing of an animated video on gender-based violence developed under this project.



Mr. Arbab Talib, Commissioner for Afghan Refugees Balochistan, stressed the importance of SRH and family planning services for marginalized populations in Balochistan. He highlighted the need for both public and private sector involvement in improving health indicators and overcoming barriers to access. Mr. Talib emphasized the role of policy advocacy in fostering an enabling environment for SRHR services and urged stakeholders to prioritize strategies that ensure project sustainability and long-term impact.



Dr. Tehsin Fatima, Director Health Commissioner for Afghan Refugees KP, highlighted the challenges in providing SRH and family planning services to Afghan refugees in KP, where 1.4 million are registered and over 7 million are unregistered. She praised Rahnuma-FPAP for its innovative interventions, including mobile camps and community sensitization programs, which effectively address cultural barriers and enhanced service accessibility for both refugees and host communities.



Mr. Faisal Shabbir, IPPF Advisor for the RESPOND Project, outlined the project's rollout plan across partner countries and explained key milestones. He praised the multi-channel approach—integrating digital and offline methods, online campaigns, and community sessions—that effectively reached remote and underserved areas. Mr. Shabbir admired Rahnuma-FPAP's leadership, noting its exceptional recognition by other IPPF Member Associations for this project.



Mr. Faisal Nazeer, Deputy GM Operations Marie Stopes Society (MSS), elaborated the effective collaboration with Rahnuma-FPAP. He mentioned that staff training from Rahnuma-FPAP on digital health interventions and self-care has significantly enhanced MSS's capacity, enabling the use of telemedicine and self-care in their programs. He also showcased a video documentary illustrating the SRH and contraceptive services provided by MSS in humanitarian settings.



Following participants shared their insights, comments and recommendations during discussion session:

Dr. Yasmeen Sabih Qazi, CEO QZ Catalyst, praised Rahnuma-FPAP and MSS for their evidence-based approach to SRHR and maternal health during climate emergencies. She emphasized the importance of leveraging local wisdom and community-led processes for policy development. Dr. Qazi also highlighted the need for IPPF/Rahnuma-FPAP and partners to create policy briefs and advocate for SRHR services, especially as these services are often deprioritized during disasters.

Dr. Talib Lashari, Technical Advisor for CIP Sindh, appreciated Rahnuma-FPAP for its self-care and disaster mitigation models. He advocated for sharing detailed demographic data and integrating Sindh's RH and Fp Guidelines into National Disaster Plans. Dr. Lashari also encouraged the

development of policy briefs to address high population growth and climate change challenges in national and provincial policies.

Dr. Aziz Rab, CEO Greenstar Social Marketing, recommended civil society organizations to build a volunteer ecosystem for delivering SRH and contraceptive services during disasters, utilizing private practitioners and community distributors. He emphasized the importance of involving young people in planning and implementing SRHR and FP programs in humanitarian settings.

Dr. Iysha Ehsan, Director General Population Welfare Department KP, highlighted the need for age, gender, and region-specific data from Rahnuma-FPAP to plan targeted FP and SRH services at the provincial level. She also stressed the importance of implementing an effective monitoring system for disaster response plans.

Dr. Jameel Ahmed, SRH Technical Advisor UNFPA, acknowledged the innovative FP and SRH model for disaster-affected areas and refugees. He emphasized the need for strong collaboration between public and private sectors to enhance disaster preparedness and create a resilient health system for managing FP and SRH issues effectively.

Dr. Noreen Zafar, CEO Girls and Women Health Initiative (GWHI), urged the public sector to enhance disaster preparedness through a multi-sectoral approach and integration. She called for advocating the inclusion of SRHR services in national disaster management policies to ensure a comprehensive response to health emergencies.

Dr. Sabina Durrani, Director General NEHS at MoNHSR&C, mentioned about evaluating Master Trainers' skills in MISP and developing plans to update their knowledge for training health system managers. She stressed on the need for a multi-sectoral approach and adaptive strategies in FP and SRH services during disasters. Dr. Durrani also underscored the importance of investing in training programs for healthcare workers and volunteers to improve their response to SRHR needs in crises.

Dr. Masuma Zaidi, Reproductive Health Expert KFW, accentuated strengthening community-based networks and volunteer programs to enhance SRHR service accessibility in remote areas. She also highlighted the need for innovative funding mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships and international collaborations, to ensure the sustainability of SRHR initiatives.

Mr. Abdullah Khan, Secretary of PWD Balochistan, emphasized the need for a strategic approach to address critical health challenges in Balochistan. He called for additional projects like RESPOND and the expansion of service delivery to remote areas, leveraging international support to achieve substantial improvements in maternal and child health outcomes. While appreciating the outcomes of the RESPOND project, he expressed his willingness to continue the partnership with the Australian High Commission to further advance these initiatives.

Dr. Riffat Sardar, Chairperson Rahnuma-FPAP, concluded the seminar by thanking participants for their invaluable insights. She reaffirmed the organization's commitment to enhancing reproductive health, family planning, and disaster response, and urged stakeholders to maintain their support for these critical efforts.

The event's insights and recommendations outlined a roadmap for developing a resilient SRHR system to support vulnerable populations in emergencies. Rahnuma-FPAP and partners will focus on creating a sustainable framework for equitable access to quality SRHR services.

