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Quality Education stressed in refugee-affected and hosting areas

PESHAWAR: Provision of quality education through well trained teachers for youth particularly the girls with improved educational facilities in Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) community is equally important for achieving universal goal of every child having access to education.

Speaking as the chief guest Director, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education Dr. Gwang-jo Kim, delivered these remarks during a forum on Gender and Education in RAHA community organised by UNESCO Islamabad on Wednesday.

With return of 3.8 million Afghan refugees in the last ten years, Pakistan is still hosting an estimated 1.6 million refugees population including 50% of age 14 and 70% of age 18, out of these, only 5% (55,000) refugees with proof of registration card (PoR) have completed the primary education.

"Preparing girls to protect themselves and manage their lives, especially in risk environments, education lays the foundation for girls to aspire for and acquire leadership positions and participate in decision-making". Dr. Kim pointed out this while highlighting the urgent need and significance of girls education. He reminded that many girls and women amongst refugee populations were isolated even from their own nationals and did not have well-developed community structures and as such it was critical for the girls to be able to hear and add their voices on issues that concern them.

The event was attended by Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata, Director and Country Representative, UNESCO Islamabad; Yoshimi Saita, UNHCR's Assistant Representative (Operations) in Pakistan, Tracy Vienings, Deputy Country Director Programme UNDP; Naoaki Kamoshida, Economic and Development Counsellor of the Embassy of Japan and representative of the Government, civil society organizations and youth and women IDPs participants from RAHA community. Speaking on the occasion, Country Director/Representative, UNESCO Pakistan, Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata said that the United Nations in Pakistan under One UN Programme had positively responded to the issue and contributed to the joint efforts for refugee girls access to education.

She said the collaboration between UNESCO and UNHCR reflects UNs shared vision of sustainable and long lasting solutions ensuring that girls from Afghanistan and displaced groups have equitable access to education, science, free flow of information, cultural activities and social services during the span of their current status. The partnership between these two UN agencies would further enhance advocacy efforts and inclusion of displaced and Afghan children, youth and adults in the government's policies and programmes, she added. Under the RAHA Joint Programme which aims to improve education delivery system and rehabilitation of the education infrastructure for restoration of education services for both the Afghan and Pakistani communities, UNESCO provides its services in conducting of capacity building workshops for teachers, managers, civil society, educational planners, and female CLC facilitators, adults and youth and out of schoolchildren along with providing technical sessions on disaster reduction for stake-holders in refugee hosting areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA.

The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the global Education First initiative in 2012 to accelerate progress in getting every child into school, especially girls.

He rightly pointed out: "We are aiming to teach more than reading and counting; we are striving to raise global citizens who can rise to the complex challenges of the twenty-first century. – APP

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