



PR & Media Department
National Commission for Human Development

DAWN
2nd July, 2009

Promotion of girls' enrolment stressed

By A Reporter

SLAMMABAD, July 1:

The speakers pointed out that inaccessibility to schools, low enrolment, high dropout rate, missing facilities, bad infrastructure, and trend of opening new schools on political basis were some of the major problems in the government schools affecting the students.

Human Development Commission (NCHD) chairperson Nafisa Shah said gender segregation was not natural, rather it was a policy matter.

She said although Pakistan had shown some positive indicators in girls' education as their enrolment had increased up to 15 per cent, our needs were much greater if the target of 100 per cent enrolment was to be achieved.

Ms Shah said in a poor country like Pakistan there was no possibility to make

separate schools for girls and boys.
"We need to reduce gender gap to overcome the issue of girls' education."

In her presentation on "Girls' education: Policy and planning gaps in improving access and retention," Dr Fareeha Zafar, a representative of the Society for the Advancement of Education, said poverty had a greater impact on girls' access to education as the cost of education beyond primary level could not be afforded by poor families. Meanwhile, they also face burden of housework, large family size, and extended family obligations, she noted.

Dr Zafar in her presentation also mentioned constraints in rural and urban areas, and gaps in gender focus at policy level. Zulfiqar Ahmad, a representative of the NCHD,

shared the details of the commission's Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme which targeted out-of-school children.

The UPE programme, he said, was implemented through the public sector institutions.

With the help of village volunteers and concerned primary schoolteachers, the data of out-of-school children is collected through a door-to-door survey, he said, adding that these volunteers then motivate the parents for in time enrolment in nearest schools. Where there are no schools within commuting distance, the NCHD opened formal community primary-based schools to ensure access to education, he said.

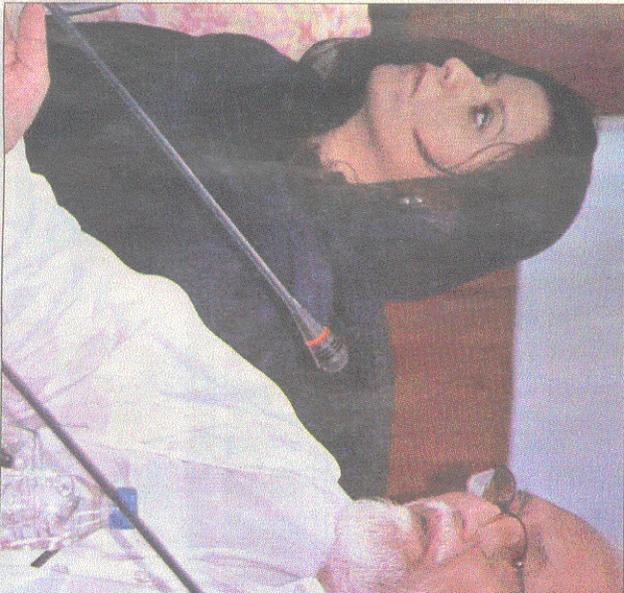
Mohammad Ashraf, on behalf of the Punjab education department, talked about the interventions taken by the provincial government

for increasing girls' enrolment, including provision of stipend to girl students, distribution of free textbooks, upgradation of schools, distribution of edible oil and adoption of schools.

Earlier, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Country Program Director Alice Harding Shackelford shared the findings of the impact analysis report on "Access to Education and Retention of Girls in Schools."

Talking about the key features of report, she said, the key features were to look at the issues of female teachers and management of the schools and also finding ways and means of improving the education system.

Government should also replicate some of the good models in the schools to enhance the capacity of the children, she said.



DEPUTY Chairman, Planning Commission, Sardar Assef A group meeting on 'Access to education and retention of Wednesday. MINA Nafesa Shah looks