

Govt launches 'Scaling up Nutrition Programme'

Written by Imaduddin

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BHURBAN: Minister for Planning and Development, Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday launched "Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) Programme" to overcome malnutrition in mothers and children.

The programme was launched by the Ministry of Planning and Development in collaboration with UNICEF and other international partners with an aim to identify the hurdles in access to food and share international best practices to overcome the malnutrition problems.

The other objectives were to address malnutrition through a multi-sectoral and well coordinated approach, harmonizing and strengthening efforts through the health, agricultural, education, social welfare and various others.

Speaking at the launching ceremony here, Ahasn Iqbal said provision of balanced nutrition for every child in the country was the top priority of government.

"Despite surplus food crops production in the country, child and mother malnutrition ratio has increased. About 44 per cent children are facing malnutrition challenges," he added.

The minister said access to quality food was a fundamental right of citizens. But about 32 per cent children were under weight and 15 per cent were facing acute shortage of food, he added.

Due to malnutrition learning power of children was affected, which was directly impacting the GDP (gross domestic product) growth by decreasing the value of social human capital, said the minister.

He said the World Health Organization had declared 15 per cent of malnutrition as an emergency for a country. "We are in a state of emergency. It requires serious attention to take popper dividend from human capital," he added.

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He said the SUN Programme was a great commitment of the government to improve the situation of most vulnerable and marginalized population groups.

The minister added that the government in its Vision 2015 and next five-year development plan had also focused social sector development by increasing its allocations to get maximum benefit from the human social capital.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Planning and Development Hasan Nawaz Tarar said the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement was an alliance of over 100 partners from member countries, international donors and governmental agencies and UN agencies.

Pakistan contributes 6 per cent of the global burden of chronically malnourished children and ranks third in the list of countries contributing to chronic malnutrition in the world, he added.

He said about 11 million children were chronically malnourished and up to 3% of the GDP was lost as a consequence of this malnutrition.

It may be recalled that Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement supports a framework for scaling up actions by member countries to address under-nutrition, scaling up cost-effective nutrition interventions.

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