

## Human Capital Summit

March 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### Nutrition and Population: A key to succeed<sup>1</sup>

#### Minutes

*Moderator:* Dr. Yasmeen Qazi, Senior Advocacy Advisor, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

*Speakers:* Sameera Maziad Al Tuwaijri, Global Lead, WBG, Zeba Sattar, Country Director of Population Council, Gail Richardson, Practice Manager, WBG

The moderator Dr. Yasmeen opened the session by stating the objective of the session, which was to focus on international best practices in population and nutrition and to discuss potential lessons for Pakistan. Next, Sameera Al Tuwaijri started her presentation by discussing the Human Capital Index in relation to health and population. She explained that higher parity associated with smaller birth intervals and decline in use of health services are driving factors for mortality. She discussed the example of Bangladesh where the total fertility rate (TFR) declined from 6.3 per woman to 2.3 per women between 1975 and 2011 through integration of family planning as part of broader health services. Similarly, she explained how women's political and economic participation helped significantly drop TFR in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Korea. She concluded with the message that for Pakistan to improve its family planning indicators there is need for political commitment (i) to human capital formation embodied in policies and programs that integrate population planning interventions into development efforts and (ii) to support women's empowerment through education and labor force participation.



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In the second presentation, Zeba Sattar discussed how some Islamic countries achieved rapid decline in fertility rates through population reforms. For example, Bangladesh initiated a vigorous family planning program in the 1970's through door-step and facility delivery, close collaboration with NGOs, women's empowerment and uninterrupted cross-party support. Iran used a well-developed rural health system with community outreach to induct family planning into basic health services. Saudi Arabia achieved lower fertility through an increase in age-at-first marriage for both genders and an increase in female education enrolment and labor force participation. In light of these examples, it was recommended that national and provincial task forces be established for providing oversight, a strong advocacy and communication campaign be developed, and the support of religious scholars be used.

In the final presentation, Gail Richardson discussed nutrition success stories from around the world and how they serve as an example to Pakistan's malnutrition crisis. She used the example of Vietnam to show how a nutrition cadre of over 100,000 nutrition coordinators and a National Nutrition Strategy help bring stunting down drastically. These Nutrition Coordinators are present at the provincial, district and community levels and are part of the Reproductive Health Network. The coordinators mobilize relevant sectors, mass organizations and communities and raise awareness of proper nutrition and malnutrition control amongst government officials and local communities. She explained how Cambodia used an effective strategy to promote exclusive breastfeeding, which included identifying breastfeeding as a top priority, setting up mothers support groups and a strong communications campaign across country. Next, she discussed the example of Peru, which relied on a multi-sectoral strategy, aligning policies and programs to bring stunting down by more than 50% in a decade. The presentation stressed the importance of thinking multi-sectorally, with commitment from the highest level. The presentation ended with identifying Prime Minister's remarks on stunting in his first speech as an opportunity that if leveraged could help fight Pakistan malnutrition crisis.

The session concluded with a video on Peru's success in overcoming stunting crisis. It narrated the story of how they more than halved their high rates of stunting among children under-five in less than a decade. They tracked the growth of children in two districts through working closely with their mothers. They used a multi-sectoral approach, with a focus on educating mothers which later served as a model for a national strategy on fighting malnutrition in the entire country. Today Peru is among the top in this global fight against child stunting, and serves as an example for many countries, including Pakistan (presentation attached).



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