



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION ISLAMABAD

2 August 2016

Media Release

Australia committed to reducing malnutrition in Pakistan

The Australian Government through the World Bank is supporting the Government of Balochistan to address malnutrition including by encouraging breastfeeding, Australian High Commissioner Margaret Adamson said today.

Noting that this week was World Breastfeeding Week, Ms Adamson said Australia's AUD17 million nutrition project would assist improve access to nutrition in seven districts of Balochistan.

"This project will continue the Australian Government-supported work to improve nutrition particularly for women and children. This will include encouraging and educating women to breastfeed where possible," Ms Adamson said.

Australian High Commission and World Bank staff recently met with Balochistan Secretary Health Dr. Muhammad Umer Baloch, DG Health Services Dr. Masood Qadir Nousherwani and Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Dawood Mohammad Baloch in Quetta to assess progress.

"Improved coordination between development partners and the Government of Balochistan will be essential for the collective success of the various nutrition projects implementing in the province," Secretary Baloch said.

"Government of Balochistan committed PKR106 million last year for the nutrition project, and has allocated a further PKR96 million this year," Additional Chief Secretary Baloch said.

The Balochistan nutrition project will be implemented at the community level through the Lady Health Workers (LHW) program. Recruitment and training have been completed and the project is expected to commence in districts shortly. This will include: identification of malnourished children; promotion of early initiation and exclusive breast feeding; improving diversity of foods in regular meals; and providing multi-micro-nutrients, zinc supplements and ready to use therapeutic foods for malnourished children under five years of age, along with iron and folic acid supplementation for expecting and lactating women.

Pakistan faces a severe nutrition crisis with 44 per cent of children being stunted, a symptom of chronic malnutrition that impacts both the physical and mental development of a child. Wasting (gradual reduction in fullness and strength of the body) has reached the globally adopted emergency threshold of 15 per cent. These rates are even higher for the children in Balochistan where 52 per cent of children are stunted.

Contact: Media Officer on 051 8355422