

Government of Pakistan
Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division
Press Release

President Hails Ehsaas Inclusive Disability Policies



January 9, 2020 – Islamabad: President Arif Alvi today hosted a high-level consultation with leading civil society representatives from across Pakistan to discuss how the government is expanding access to services for people with disabilities through the Ehsaas program. Also, in attendance were the First Lady of Pakistan, Mrs. Samina Alvi, SAPM on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Sania Nishtar, SAPM on Health, Dr. Zafar Mirza, the wives of the Governors of Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, MD Pakistan Bait ul Mal, Aon Abbas Bappi, representative from WHO, civil society as well as other representatives from across the federal government.

“Differently-abled people deserve our special attention as they face many hardships, not all of them as a result of their disability,” said President Arif Alvi. He emphasized that collective efforts from all segments of society in synergy with the Government are required to mainstream them in society as well as in social, economic and political decision making.”

Held in the President’s House in Islamabad, the two-hour session included a presentation by Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection, who explained how Ehsaas is targeting its policies to ensure that the differently abled can thrive in Pakistan.

“Under the Ehsaas Framework, differently-abled persons will be supported and empowered by new policies, including social protection, health insurance, government job quotas and access to opportunities,” said Dr. Nishtar during consultation. “The Government aims to ensure the inclusion of disabled people in mainstream society and we are grateful to civil society for engaging in these efforts to uplift marginalized groups.”

Specific policies to support people with disabilities within the Ehsaas Strategy include; Insaaf health insurance cards, which provide beneficiaries access to treatment in registered hospitals, universal access to assistive devices, including wheelchairs and hearing aids, quotas in government housing schemes and government employment, certificates of disability issued by public sector hospitals according to UN definitions, establishment of 20 centers for the physically challenged in under-privileged districts, and accessibility requirements for public buildings.

The World Health Organization estimates that between 10 and 15 per cent of the world's population live with a disability, which if applied to Pakistan would number between 20 and 31 million people. According to official estimates in Pakistan, which are believed to be conservative, 2.5 per cent of the population has some form of "severe" disability, which suggest many people are falling through the cracks and not in receipt of the support they deserve. A National Rapid Assistive Technology (AT) Assessment Survey to assess the population in need of AT is underway to assess the type of Assistive products needed. This survey is being conducted by the Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination.