

Government of Pakistan
Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division
Press Release

Ehsaas ties the knot with Facebook



December 14, 2019 – Islamabad: Today, in partnership with Facebook and Invest2Innovate, the Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety Division launched the first-of-its-kind Design Hackathon on malnutrition at the National Incubation Centre in Islamabad. Over the course of two-days, the Design Hackathon will connect experts in malnutrition with digital marketers who, with additional support from Facebook, will help build innovative digital campaigns for social media around the challenges of malnutrition. This is the first in a series of Ehsaas - Facebook collaborative initiatives. The hackathon and its partner Invest2Innovate not only aim to support entrepreneurs, but also to encourage growth of internal innovation, facilitate access to capital, mitigate risk for investors and supporting players, and strengthen the policy environment for businesses in Pakistan.

During the hackathon, ten teams will work to develop possible campaign solutions and designs that can be developed further and implemented as the Ehsaas program's official content on Facebook. Throughout the hackathon, participants will benefit from industry-expert mentors providing guidance in a range of necessary skills, including in pitching, budgeting and impact assessment.

On the final day, three teams will be selected to present their ideas to a high-level panel of leadership from the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division, along with representatives from the World Bank. The winning team will receive advertisement credits and additional support from Facebook to launch their malnutrition focused digital marketing campaign on the leading social media platform.

“To fight malnutrition today, we need 21st century tools such as digital marketing techniques on social media that can reach wide audiences,” said Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, speaking today at the launch event. “We recognize millions of children in Pakistan suffer a range of health and development consequences due to malnutrition in all its forms; that’s why we have made malnutrition a top priority area of the Ehsaas poverty alleviation program.” Adding further, she said, “Stunting, obesity and chronic diseases are closely interlinked.”

Pakistan is facing a crisis in terms of malnutrition; every year, the country loses 3 percent of its GDP to stunting—a situation in which children cannot grow in height, and their cognitive abilities do not develop, posing a major setback in today’s knowledge economy. Stunting, as well as under-nutrition in young children and over-nutrition later in life all lead to higher risk of costly diseases, like hypertension and diabetes. Such conditions lock communities in cycles of poverty through high health care costs and an inability to participate meaningfully in local and national economies.

Ehsaas has several initiatives to address malnutrition, including a new community, health and nutrition initiative to address stunting in children; the establishment of the first-ever university hosted National Centre for Human Nutrition; the provision of de-worming drugs, iron, folic acid, micro-nutrient supplements through government hospitals; awareness campaigns regarding breast feeding and complimentary feeding; and a multi-sectoral Nutrition Coordinating Body under the Prime Minister’s oversight.

The Design Hackathon will serve as a critical platform for leading digital marketers to engage directly with Ehsaas officials in order to assist the program in developing additional innovative solutions to address today’s malnutrition challenge.