

Marrakech 2023 Communications Plan: Outreach on Inclusive Growth in Pakistan

On March 15-17, the Middle East and Central Asia Department (MCD) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) presented the book "Promoting Inclusive Growth in the Middle East and North Africa" at Pakistan's leading academic institutions and think tanks.¹ The events attracted strong interest and facilitated a discussion on reforms that would generally promote higher, more inclusive growth in Pakistan, by streamlining SOEs, strengthening the business environment, and enhancing the education and skills of Pakistan's labor force while reducing gender gaps.

Inclusive growth is core to IMF's dialogue with our membership at the 2023 Marrakech Spring Meetings.

DG and Dean NUST, Rector and Pro-Chancellor LUMS, Vice-chancellor University of Karachi, and Director and Dean AERC, graced the events with their presence. The two-hour seminars covered the book's findings and policy perspectives for the MENA region and Pakistan, followed by interactive Q&A sessions with participants. Esther Perez-Ruiz (Pakistan Resident Representative) noted that these events provide a valuable opportunity to exchange views on raising living standards with leading academics and the youth of Pakistan. Roberto Cardarelli's keynote address emphasized the criticality of inclusive growth and economic transformation to our membership post-COVID. Nathan Porter underscored that SOE and subsidy reform, education and skills upgrading, and the economic inclusion of women are vital to leveraging Pakistan's demographic dividend, lifting per capita GDP over the next decade and sharing the benefits widely. Monica Petrescu, Sidra Rehman and Hippolyte W. Balima, respectively delivered presentations on the drivers of private-sector-led growth; strengthening the functioning of labor markets to ensure all can benefit in the face of automation; and raising female inclusion in the MENA region and Pakistan. A representative from the Ministry of Finance discussed the government's nascent efforts towards Gender Budgeting, with support from FAD CD.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has experienced some progress in poverty reduction, literacy, and life spans but has struggled to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of economic development and diversification. Inactive youth, limited economic opportunities for women, underdeveloped private sectors and fragmented social protection systems are among the main unresolved issues. Countries across the MENA region need to change their economic models to make sure that the benefits of economic development accrue to all their citizens. This book provides a comprehensive overview of policies that will boost inclusive growth in the regional context within a resilient macroeconomic policy framework.

PARTICIPANTS

 Mr. Nathan Porter Mission Chief for Pakistan, MCD	 Mr. Roberto Cardarelli Assistant Director, MCD	 Ms. Esther Perez Ruiz Resident Representative of IMF in Pakistan, MCD
 Ms. Sidra Rehman Economist, MCD	 Ms. Monica Petrescu Economist, AFD	 Mr. Hippolyte Wesselyne Balima Economist, MCD

MODERATOR

 Dr. Nadia Majid Associate Professor Chair, Dept. of Economics, LUMS

TIME 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
DATE Thursday, March 16, 2023
VENUE SDSB-304

¹ The team comprised of R. Cardarelli, N. Porter, S. Rehman, M. Petrescu, H.W. Balima, and E. Perez-Ruiz. Z. Hayat, S. Masood and Muhammad Ali in the local office provided excellent support with seminar preparations. Events were held in the Islamabad National University of Sciences and Technology, Lahore University of Management Sciences, and the University of Karachi. The host universities convened representatives from major think tanks and academic institutions, namely, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Muhammad Ali Jinnah University, International Islamic University, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Bahria University, Quaid-e-Azam University, Capital University of Science and Technology, Air University, NED University, and Usman Institute of Engineering and Technology, and Greenwich University.

Audiences sensitized IMF staff to key interests and concerns regarding the inclusive growth agenda. Pakistan has a poor track record in utilizing labor, mobilizing investment and exports, and tackling poverty and inequality. Against this backdrop, seminars' participants sought staff's views on (i) the potential for SOEs' privatization to make material progress in MENA and implications for inequality; (ii) how to enhance labor markets' absorption capacity in the face of automation/AI and working remotely; (iii) the economic empowerment of women and integration of the gender agenda into the social safety nets; (iv) policies that can enhance more transparent and accountable public sectors; (v) avenues to better embed the above mentioned policies in IMF programs.

Audiences appreciated the IMF proactively putting inclusive growth at the top of the policy agenda for Marrakech 2023. The seminars have helped improve the Fund's image as a partner for enhancing dialogue on policies that can promote growth and inclusiveness, especially for women, youth, and entrepreneurs. The seminars underlined the need to right-size the state's footprint in the economy, remove distortions from subsidies and preferential treatments, enhance vocational education and training, and enforce women's rights to facilitate their participation in the labor force. A key theme was that macroeconomic stability, growth, and inclusion are mutually reinforcing objectives, with stability the base on which efforts to pursue the other two objectives can be built.



Outreach next steps. The communication plan around these events includes a few op-eds by ([The News](#), [The Express Tribune](#), and [Business Recorder](#)). The RRO is leveraging the seminar events to encourage outstanding students to apply for the *Youth Fellowship Program* and participate to the youth-dedicated event at the Marrakech Annual Meetings.

Marrakech 2023 Annual Meetings: Outreach on Inclusive Growth

Islamabad National University of Science and Technology



Islamabad National University of Science and Technology



Lahore University of Management Sciences

Lahore University of Management Sciences



University of Karachi AERC

University of Karachi AERC

