



Proceedings of the AASSA-PAS Webinar IV / Hybrid Workshop on COVID-19 and Higher Education: Addressing Food Insecurity through Policy Support and Research

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The Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) and the Association of Academies and Societies of Sciences in Asia (AASSA), with the support of the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), organized an AASSA-PAS Webinar VI/Hybrid Workshop on **COVID-19 and Higher Education: Addressing Food Insecurity through Policy Support and Research**: 24 June 2021, in the Pakistan Academy of Sciences. In total, 13 lectures were delivered by leading experts, of which four were delivered by international speakers from Australia, Canada, China, and the UK, and eight lectures by Pakistani speakers. **H.E. Syed Fakhar Imam**, Federal Minister, National Food Security, and Research, inaugurated the webinar.

Prof. Khalid M. Khan, President Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS), welcomed the guests, speakers, organizers, and webinar participants to the fourth workshop of this series on Pandemic Preparedness, Science, and Countermeasures. He added that in the previous three webinars, PAS had successfully covered important aspects including gender, poverty, food, and marginalized income, and other aspects to create awareness among the public. He thanked **Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Syed Fakhar Imam** for managing time to grace the occasion with his online participation and to inaugurate the event.

Prof. Zabta Khan Shinwari, Treasurer-AASSA, and Fellow PAS appreciated the efforts of AASSA-PAS, organizers, attendees, and speakers to collectively participate in this webinar and for their communication about the topics for webinar-IV. He recognized the participation of all in this webinar and emphasized arranging other similar webinars in the future with the collaboration of AASSA and IAP. He thanked all the eminent personalities and other participants from various ministries of the Government of Pakistan for their physical presence to participate in this webinar. **Prof. Yoo Hang Kim, President of AASSA**, acknowledged the efforts of AASSA for organizing this webinar. He expressed his gratitude to **President PAS and Treasurer AASSA** for their cooperation to make this webinar a success.

In his keynote address, **Prof. Viktor Bogatov, Academician of Russian Academy of Sciences and Chief Academic Secretary of Far Eastern Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences**, discussed the imbalance in COVID-19 cases across the world and emphasized the role of science and technology in tackling the pandemic.

H.E. Syed Fakhar Imam, Federal Minister, National Food Security, and Research, Government of Pakistan, inaugurated the webinar and highlighted the impact of the pandemic on people. He conceded the role of institutions and the armed forces to maintain, organize and collect statistics about the pandemic from all over the world. He expressed his desire to improve exports from Pakistan's food and agriculture sector. He added that some 8.4 million tons of rice, 8.4 million tons of maize, and 1 million tons of sugarcane are produced, contributing to GDP growth in Pakistan, and said emphasis should also be on food and livestock production.

Prof. Dr. Tasawar Hayat, Secretary General, PAS thanked Prof. Dr. Zabta Khan Shinwari (Chief organizer of the Webinar Series) for his contributions to the organization of the webinar.

Prof. Dr. Iqrar A. Khan (VC-UAF), Prof. Dr. Kausar A. Malik (Fellow, PAS), and Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum (VC, AIU) were the moderators of the Technical Sessions. Speakers delivered lectures on different issues and topics:

- Food Security Challenge and Options
- Enhance Food and Nutritional Security
- Plant Genetic Resources Management under Pandemic Constraint Context
- CropWatch for Ensuring Food Security under COVID-19
- Soybean as an Intercrop
- Precision for Efficient Agriculture
- Biotech Role in Ensuring Food Security
- COVID-19: Higher Education challenges and responses
- No student left behind in remote areas like Waziristan with less or no Internet connectivity in pandemic Covid19
- Way forward for Higher Education in Pandemics
- COVID-19 Reshape the World: Can it be a positive catalyst for ecological sustainability and Sustainable Development Goals: A case study from Swat
- Post-Covid Higher Education: Responses, Recovery, and Resilience.

In the concluding session, Prof. Yoo Hang Kim, President-AASSA, appreciated the efforts of the AASSA-PAS webinar organizers, participants, and speakers to make this event a success. **Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan, Federal Secretary, Education, and Professional Training**, Chief Guest of the **Concluding Session**, expressed her views about misinformation in the epidemic. She suggested exploring new ways of learning to standardize the provision of education to the people. She was happy to notice that the webinar focused on educators and researchers in different parts of the world to find out how COVID-19 has affected them and how they are coping with the changes. She expressed that, through this webinar, we will also be able to highlight lessons learned and potential positive outcomes of the global lockdown for higher education. She further added that these workshops are forums at which we share our experiences, successes, and failures as well, and learn from each other for the benefit of humankind. The valuable lessons we learned at this workshop must not remain only among ourselves. These must be propagated as widely as possible. I also urge this workshop, through the collective intelligence of the participants, to formulate good recommendations to all stakeholders, including policymakers, scientists, and the general public. In conclusion, Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan thanked all the delegates (who joined virtually) and assured the audience that from the Government's side, ministry authorities shall always be there to assist PAS and other institutions in endeavours to combat the pandemic.

Prof. Zabta Khan Shinwari gave recommendations for countering this epidemic. While appreciating the efforts of AASSA and IAP for supporting such events, he said recommendations of the current webinars will add to the IAP communique: <https://www.interacademies.org/publication/iap-communique-covid-19> about covid-19. He suggested the realization of the needs of students' learning and encouraged universities to revive their policies for providing education in this epidemic as students face internet connectivity issues in far-off places. He proposed collaboration and countering of misinformation to fight against this epidemic and recommended for provision of the following opportunities to students and others:

- Awareness to students about various communication platforms for learning.
- Peer mentors and student leaders are a need of the hour to cultivate a sense of learning.

- Provision of opportunities to people to share their experiences and engaging them with necessary tools to make learning more efficient.
- Encouraging collaboration and understanding all the problems of students would help in standardizing the culture of learning at the national level.
- Provision of vaccines to all people within our community.

Towards the end of the concluding session, Medals/Cash Prizes were distributed among the winners of a poster competition.

