

Social Enterprise Summit (SES)

2025

Supported by:

Arweqah Alreyadah, PMYP,
UNFPA, VMS, PPAF, OCT Daily



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Organized by: Social Innovation Academy (SIA)



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1. Introduction

The Social Enterprise Summit (SES) 2025 marked a transformative milestone in Pakistan's journey toward building a sustainable and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. Organized by the Social Innovation Academy (SIA) and supported by key national and international development partners—including Arweqah Alreayadah, UNFPA, PMYP, VMS, PPAF, and OCT Daily—the summit served as a dynamic platform to amplify the voices of social entrepreneurs, policymakers, development practitioners, investors, academics, and youth leaders.

Held at the prestigious Mövenpick Hotel in Islamabad, SES 2025 convened over 300 delegates from diverse backgrounds, representing government agencies, international organizations, grassroots enterprises, academia, and the private sector. The event aimed to catalyze collective efforts to shape a robust ecosystem that supports the development and scaling of social enterprises across Pakistan, particularly in underserved regions.

The overarching theme of SES 2025—"Co-creating Impactful Futures"—reflected the summit's commitment to fostering social innovation, promoting inclusive economic growth, and enabling the youth to take ownership of social change. At its core, the summit underscored the power of social enterprises to address complex challenges such as poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and climate change while fostering sustainable livelihoods and community resilience.

Strategic Objectives

SES 2025 was strategically designed around the following core objectives:

1. **Ecosystem Strengthening:** To identify barriers and opportunities within Pakistan's social enterprise ecosystem and advocate for enabling policies, innovative financing, and capacity-building support.
2. **Youth Empowerment:** To provide young changemakers, especially women and those from marginalized communities, with the tools, networks, and inspiration needed to launch and scale social enterprises.
3. **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** To encourage dialogue and partnerships among stakeholders across sectors—government, civil society, academia, media, and business—for collective impact.
4. **Knowledge Exchange:** To share local and global best practices in social innovation, enterprise development, impact measurement, and inclusive finance.
5. **Startup Visibility and Investment Readiness:** To spotlight promising social startups through the "Impact Startup Challenge 2025," linking them with investors, mentors, and accelerators.

Rationale and Significance

Pakistan is home to a dynamic population of over 240 million people, with nearly 64% under the age of 30. This demographic dividend, if harnessed effectively, holds the key to unlocking the country's development potential. However, challenges such as youth unemployment, limited access to education, financial exclusion, and a lack of policy coherence continue to hinder inclusive progress.

In this context, SES 2025 emerged as a timely response an action-oriented summit that not only spotlighted Pakistan's emerging social enterprise landscape but also offered actionable pathways to scale innovation, inclusion, and resilience. The summit emphasized the importance of moving from fragmented efforts to coordinated, ecosystem-wide strategies that foster systemic change.

Moreover, the participation of international allies such as Arweqah Alreyadah and VMS underscored Pakistan's potential to collaborate on regional and global levels. These partnerships demonstrated the alignment of national aspirations with global development agendas such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG-1 (No Poverty), SDG-5 (Gender Equality), SDG-8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG-17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Format and Highlights

The summit featured a carefully curated mix of sessions designed to foster strategic learning, networking, and action planning. The agenda included:

- A grand Opening Ceremony featuring senior government officials and international dignitaries.
- High-impact Keynote Speeches by global thought leaders in entrepreneurship and social innovation.
- Two Thematic Panel Discussions focusing on the current state of social enterprises in Pakistan and ecosystem development.
- Three Breakout Sessions on sector-specific themes: climate change, health and wellbeing, and digital innovation.
- The Impact Startup Challenge 2025, a national-level pitch competition.
- A forward-looking Closing Ceremony presenting the SES 2025 Charter and next steps.

Each session was structured to deliver actionable insights, foster inclusivity, and identify clear areas for policy and programmatic follow-up.

In summary, SES 2025 was not just an event; it was a movement—a collective effort to harness entrepreneurship for social good. It provided a foundational platform to transition from ideas to implementation, from isolated efforts to integrated systems, and from hope to measurable impact.

2.Executive Summary

The Social Enterprise Summit (SES) 2025, held on February 26, 2025, at the Mövenpick Hotel in Islamabad, marked a pivotal moment in Pakistan's journey toward building a values-driven, inclusive, and innovation-led economy. Organized by the Social Innovation Academy (SIA) and supported by leading partners including Arweqah Alreyadah, the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), UNFPA, VMS, PPAF, and OCT Daily, the summit convened over 350 stakeholders from government, academia, grassroots organizations, international agencies, and the private sector. The event focused on the central theme of "Building Ecosystems for Social Enterprise in Pakistan," and positioned social enterprise as a strategic tool for development, rooted in justice, sustainability, and economic resilience.

Through four compelling keynote addresses by regional and national leaders including Mr. Basel Al-Aghbar (Arweqah Alreyadah), Mr. Ezzeldin Osama (VMS), Ms. Ayesha Khan (Ministry of Climate Change), and Prof. Faiz Shah (Yunus Center, AIT) the summit underscored the urgent need to shift from donor dependency and fragmented initiatives to long-term, systems-level ecosystem building. These keynotes explored cross-border collaboration, startup studio models, climate-responsive policy frameworks, and the integration of faith-based finance in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Three high-level panel discussions further examined inclusive innovation, ecosystem infrastructure, and faith-inspired models, generating practical recommendations across policy, finance, education, and capacity-building.

Key outcomes of SES 2025 included commitments by the Ministry of Climate Change to integrate social enterprise into national strategy, early planning for a Saudi-Pakistan Youth Exchange Program, and ongoing consultations for a Social Enterprise Ecosystem Roadmap (2025-2030) led by SIA and its partners. The summit demonstrated that Pakistan has the vision, talent, and institutional momentum to become a regional hub for social innovation. SES 2025 closed with a unified message: social enterprise is not a parallel sector—it is central to building an economy that serves people, protects the planet, and promotes dignity through enterprise.

3. Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony of SES 2025 set an energizing and visionary tone for the entire summit. With over 300 delegates in attendance at the prestigious Mövenpick Hotel in Islamabad, the event commenced with solemnity and purpose.

Welcome Remarks and Summit Vision by Mr. Ali Zain Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Social Innovation Academy (SIA)

Opening the Social Enterprise Summit (SES) 2025, Mr. Ali Zain Ul Abidin, CEO of the Social Innovation Academy (SIA), welcomed the participants and presented the strategic vision that shaped the purpose, structure, and scope of the summit. He framed the event as a critical national moment one designed to bridge thought leadership, policy action, and grassroots entrepreneurship in order to accelerate meaningful social and economic transformation across Pakistan. In his address, Mr. Ali Zain emphasized that SES 2025 was not conceived as a traditional conference, but as a platform for systems-level change. He described the summit as a response to the country's pressing need for inclusive and sustainable development models that prioritize community ownership, youth innovation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

He highlighted that the three core themes of the summit innovation, inclusion, and sustainability were intentionally selected to guide every session, keynote, and dialogue throughout the day. These themes, he noted, reflect the foundational belief that solving Pakistan's most complex challenges requires cross-sector convergence, bold experimentation, and a collective shift in how success is defined.

"The journey toward a just and resilient Pakistan," he stated, "starts with empowering people to solve problems in their own communities. Social enterprises are vehicles for that transformation."

Mr. Zain positioned social enterprises not merely as small-scale solutions, but as instruments of structural change blending the ingenuity of entrepreneurship with the mission of social justice. He called on participants to view social enterprises as scalable, values-driven entities capable of generating not only income, but also dignity, opportunity, and trust in underserved regions.

He further emphasized the importance of partnerships across government, development agencies, academia, and the private sector, noting that sustainable change cannot be achieved in silos. By bringing diverse actors into one room, he explained, SES 2025 aimed to create alignment between national policy goals and grassroots innovation efforts.

Mr. Zain concluded his remarks by inviting all participants to engage actively and co-own the outcomes of the summit. His message was clear: Pakistan has both the talent and the urgency to lead a regional movement for inclusive social enterprise, and SES 2025 would be a foundational step toward that vision.

Special Address by the Chief Guest – Mr. Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan

As Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Mr. Rana Mashhood delivered an impassioned keynote, stressing the role of social enterprises in national development. He congratulated the organizers for creating a vibrant space that empowers youth to channel their creativity toward social good. He linked SES 2025 with the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP), emphasizing alignment in goals of entrepreneurship promotion, economic inclusion, and social equity.

Mr. Mashhood stated, "Pakistan's youth are our biggest asset. Social enterprises offer a pathway to not only reduce unemployment but to rebuild communities through innovation and values. The government stands ready to support this movement."

3. Keynote Addresses

Basel Al-Aghbar

**Director of Impact Investment & Entrepreneurship,
Arweqah Alreyadah | Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Title: *Impact Beyond Borders: Building Bridges Through Social Enterprise*

Introduction: A Vision Rooted in Values

The Social Enterprise Summit 2025 in Islamabad opened with a powerful keynote by Mr. Basel Al-Aghbar, a regional pioneer in impact investment and entrepreneurship. Representing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the Director of Impact Investment and Entrepreneurship at Arweqah Alreyadah, Mr. Al-Aghbar's address set the tone for the summit's ambitious goals: regional collaboration, youth empowerment, and scalable models for social transformation.

His keynote, titled "Impact Beyond Borders: Building Bridges Through Social Enterprise," offered not only a personal narrative and organizational journey but a regional roadmap for leveraging Islamic social finance and youth-led innovation to tackle systemic challenges across borders.

"This summit is more than an exchange of ideas. It is a celebration of the enduring friendship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia a friendship grounded in shared values and a commitment to empowering the next generation."

— Basel Al-Aghbar

Opening Reflections: A Brotherhood of Purpose

Mr. Al-Aghbar opened his address by expressing gratitude to the organizers, particularly the Social Innovation Academy (SIA), for creating a platform that transcends conversations and moves toward real impact. He underscored that the Pakistan Saudi relationship goes beyond bilateral cooperation it embodies a shared vision of justice, dignity, and inclusive prosperity.

He positioned this summit not merely as a gathering of development professionals but as a collaborative space where nations co-author a new chapter in social innovation. The friendship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, he asserted, must evolve from traditional diplomacy to transformational development partnerships rooted in shared moral and cultural foundations.

The Arweqah Model: Blending Tradition with Innovation

Tracing the roots of Arweqah Alreyadah, Mr. Al-Aghbar described its evolution from a philanthropic initiative to one of the Middle East's most prominent social enterprise enablers. Founded on three key pillars social investment, social innovation, and economic empowerment Arweqah challenges the conventional dichotomy between charity and business.

"At Arweqah, we never saw charity and business as opposites. We saw them as partners. Our goal was simple yet radical: build an ecosystem where solving social problems becomes the most valued currency."

Today, Arweqah operates across seven countries, employs more than 250 professionals, and collaborates with 35+ local and international partners to deliver system-level social innovation.

Systems-Level Achievements: A Legacy of Impact

Mr. Al-Aghbar detailed a series of landmark achievements that illustrate Arweqah's commitment to innovation, scale, and sustainability:

1. Empowering Over 1,200 Social Entrepreneurs

Through bespoke funding, mentorship, and capacity-building, Arweqah has enabled changemakers in education, agriculture, fintech, and climate innovation to design and scale viable solutions.

2. MENA's First Social Enterprise Accreditation System

Arweqah pioneered a regulatory breakthrough by launching a certification program for social enterprises. With 110+ organizations accredited, the system has created a benchmark for credibility and investment-readiness.

3.15 Mission-Aligned Subsidiaries

From food security to childhood development, Arweqah established socially driven enterprises that function as both service providers and innovation pilots.

4. Reviving Islamic Endowments (Awqaf)

Over ten years, Arweqah grew its awqaf portfolio from SAR 300,000 to SAR 1 billion, transforming these traditional tools into dynamic sources of long-term community investment.

5. Social Innovation Labs and Hajj Innovation Camp

By convening real-world problem-solving sessions during Hajj, Arweqah fosters co-creation between service users and tech innovators. These labs are now the largest of their kind in the MENA region.

6. Grassroots Economic Empowerment

With 40,000+ individuals empowered, 13,000 productive families supported, and 5,000+ jobs created, Arweqah's model reflects scalable, data-driven development.

A Bold Vision: Listing a Non-Profit on the Stock Exchange

In a groundbreaking announcement, Mr. Al-Aghbar revealed Arweqah's ambition to become the first non-profit social enterprise in the MENA region to be publicly listed. This initiative is a regional first and a message to the world that impact-driven institutions can be financially viable, investment-worthy, and ethically grounded. "We believe the future of finance is impact-driven. Listing Arweqah signals to the world that social value and financial sustainability can and must coexist." The initiative is set to redefine how capital markets view value, blending social mission with financial performance through transparency, governance, and measurable outcomes.

Pakistan-Saudi Collaboration: Seizing the Youth Dividend

Shifting the lens to Pakistan, Mr. Al-Aghbar emphasized the strategic demographic alignment between the two nations: 64% of Pakistan's population and 63% of Saudi Arabia's are under the age of 30-35. He called this a historic opportunity for youth-driven enterprise transformation.

"Our youth are not passive they are architects of our future. The question is: are we giving them the institutions, resources, and belief to succeed?"

He proposed three actionable initiatives to institutionalize bilateral youth engagement:

- **Pakistan-Saudi Youth Social Enterprise Exchange Program**

A cross-border incubator for young social entrepreneurs to share solutions and receive mentorship.

- **Joint Youth Innovation Labs on the SDGs**

Collaborative labs focused on localized solutions for poverty, education, and sustainability.

- **Shared Zakat and Waqf-Based Seed Fund**

Utilizing Islamic finance instruments to fund early-stage, impact-first enterprises across both countries.

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A Call to Action: Bridges Over Borders

Mr. Al-Aghbar concluded with a passionate call for collective action rooted in values, equity, and trust. He challenged governments, investors, universities, and civil society to build "impact bridges" across borders that will endure beyond the summit.

"Let us build bridges of ideas, values, and enterprises. Let us remember that social progress does not come from isolated brilliance, but from collective will."

He commended the Social Innovation Academy (SIA) for its role in making the summit a space of shared ownership and pledged Arweqah's commitment to supporting Pakistan's social enterprise ecosystem through:

- Joint knowledge production
- Technical co-investment
- Shared platforms for global South collaboration



Ezzeldin Osama

Investment Manager,
VMS Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Title: *From Startups to Systems: Designing Impact Ecosystems for the Muslim World*

Introduction: Reimagining the Engine of Transformation

At the 2025 Social Enterprise Summit in Islamabad, Mr. Ezzeldin Osama, a seasoned investor, technologist, and CEO of VMS – Saudi Startup Studio, delivered a groundbreaking keynote that expanded the imagination of what is possible for entrepreneurship in Pakistan and across the Muslim world. With deep experience in venture building across the GCC and a bold vision for systemic reform, Mr. Osama titled his keynote “From Startups to Systems: Designing Impact Ecosystems for the Muslim World.”

From the outset, his message was clear: entrepreneurship must evolve beyond isolated success stories to become a structured, value-based ecosystem. His opening words captured this ethos with clarity:

“Our challenge today is not the lack of startups; it is the lack of systems to help them survive, scale, and serve societies at large.”

He praised the Social Innovation Academy (SIA) for curating a platform grounded in collaboration and relevance, affirming the summit as a milestone for building impact infrastructure in the Global South.

VMS: The Startup Studio as a Systemic Solution

Mr. Osama introduced the VMS Startup Studio model, which he described as a departure from traditional incubators or accelerators. VMS is not a support service it is a venture production company that co-builds startups from ideation to scale using shared teams, pooled equity, and embedded technical infrastructure.

The studio model operates in three strategic phases:

- **Venture Origination**

VMS begins by identifying socially relevant problems, such as gaps in education, digital health, or climate resilience, often drawn from direct community listening and systems analysis.

- **Co-Creation and Startup Building**

VMS then assembles teams founders, developers, designers supported by an internal bench of strategists, legal experts, and growth advisors. Each venture is born within an environment of shared learning and risk management.

- **Scaling Through Capital and Global Networks**

Once ventures achieve MVP validation, VMS connects them with regional and global investors to catalyze growth, expansion, and entry into new markets.

Over six years, VMS has built 35 ventures, with 19 actively generating revenue and 8 operating in global markets. These include initiatives in e-learning, mental health tech, blockchain for waqf, refugee fintech, and climate resilience demonstrating that the Startup Studio model is both scalable and socially anchored.

A Blueprint for Pakistan: Local Challenges, Systemic Solutions

Drawing from VMS's success, Mr. Osama made a compelling case for Pakistan to adopt a national venture studio approach. He identified key weaknesses in the current entrepreneurial landscape:

- An idea-first rather than problem-first mindset, leading to weak product-market fit.
- A fragmented incubator ecosystem with duplicative services and minimal technical depth.
- A lack of post-grant capital, resulting in stagnation between early-stage success and long-term viability.

To address this, he proposed the creation of a Pakistan Impact Startup Studio (PISS) a collaboration between VMS, PMYP (Prime Minister's Youth Program), and Pakistani universities. This national studio would:

- Source local problems through community-driven research.
- Co-create ventures aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Share resources legal, technical, financial across a network of universities and innovation labs.
- Offer equity-linked growth, ensuring that startups are mission-aligned and self-sustaining.

"A venture studio ensures sustainability and value creation beyond just 'demo days.' It replaces vanity metrics with value metrics."

Faith-Inspired Innovation: The Muslim World as an Innovation Powerhouse

Expanding the conversation, Mr. Osama called for a redefinition of innovation within the Muslim world. He highlighted that despite possessing rich human capital, most Muslim-majority countries lag on global innovation indices. Yet the potential for faith-rooted entrepreneurship is immense.

He laid out three areas of high-impact opportunity:

- **Halal FinTech:** Solutions rooted in Islamic finance principles can serve 1.9 billion Muslims globally.
- **Islamic EdTech:** Faith-aligned learning platforms have growing demand across 60+ nations.
- **Climate-Waqf Models:** The reinvention of Islamic endowments for climate finance offers scalable, community-centered investment mechanisms.

He envisioned a "Green Digital Silk Route" a connected corridor of innovation from Jakarta to Istanbul, with Pakistan as a key hub. To accelerate this vision, he called for an OIC Innovation Charter, facilitating:

- Cross-border movement of talent and capital.
- Harmonized intellectual property policies.
- Regional venture funding aligned with faith values.

Youth as System Architects: From Recipients to Designers

Central to Mr. Osama's keynote was his unwavering belief in youth as system builders, not passive beneficiaries. He shared striking statistics: over 60% of Pakistan's population is under 30, and it hosts one of the world's fastest-growing communities of freelancers, developers, and digital entrepreneurs.

"Our young people are not waiting for handouts—they're waiting for honest scaffolding."

He challenged universities to transform their internal structures: business schools into startup studios, computer science departments into tech labs, and social science programs into policy design units. He called for integrated entrepreneurial pathways rooted in ethics, co-creation, and impact.

Tangible Proposals: Partnerships for Policy and Practice

Mr. Osama outlined a suite of actionable partnership proposals tailored to Pakistan's unique context:

- **Pakistan–GCC Startup Studio Exchange**

In partnership with SIA and the Higher Education Commission, to share models, talent, and venture playbooks.

- **National Impact Startup Studio Network**

A decentralized network hosted in public and private universities to co-build ventures aligned with regional priorities.

- **Impact Fellowship for Women in Tech**

Focused on underserved districts, combining technical training, mentorship, and early-stage seed funding.

- **Venture Ethics Curriculum**

A modular course on responsible innovation, digital ethics, and faith-aligned business models.

- **Pakistan–OIC Startup Council**

A regional body to align entrepreneurship policy, capital flows, and migration of tech talent across OIC nations.

VMS, he committed, would provide design toolkits, investor access, and capacity-building modules to all partner organizations.

Aisha Khan

Social Entrepreneur & Development Practitioner Pakistan

Title: *Unlocking the Potential of Social Enterprises in Pakistan: Collaborating for a Sustainable Future*

Introduction: The State and Social Innovation—Partners in Change

As one of the most anticipated addresses at the Social Enterprise Summit 2025, Ms. Ayesha Khan, brought a rare and vital voice to the table that of the state as an enabler of innovation. Her keynote was both a diagnosis of current limitations and a visionary call to build systems that are green, inclusive, and entrepreneurial. Ms. Khan stood firmly on the premise that public policy is not the bottleneck but the bridge. She opened her keynote with a strong affirmation of Pakistan's potential: "Social enterprises have immense capacity to transform economies and lives. But for this ecosystem to thrive, government policies must evolve offering not just regulation, but inspiration."

With this, she charted a course that centered public-private partnerships, impact-driven policy reform, and the creation of national-level support infrastructure for social entrepreneurship.



Policy Gaps and the Urgency of Action

Ms. Khan candidly acknowledged that Pakistan lacks a dedicated national policy framework for social enterprises. This absence, she argued, has created a climate of ambiguity where enterprises with public benefit missions must navigate unclear tax regulations, licensing barriers, and investor hesitancy.

“Without legal clarity, we disincentivize those trying to solve the very problems the state itself seeks to address.”

She outlined three critical consequences of this policy vacuum:

1. **Lack of Financial Incentives:** Social enterprises do not qualify for tax exemptions or subsidies, often placing them at a disadvantage compared to NGOs or private firms.
2. **Regulatory Uncertainty:** The absence of legal recognition leads to inconsistent licensing, registration, and compliance procedures across provinces.
3. **Limited Access to Growth Capital:** Impact investors hesitate to invest in entities without standardized governance or social reporting frameworks.

These systemic issues, Ms. Khan emphasized, disproportionately affect women-led and community-based enterprises, which often operate in informal economies and rural markets.

The Vision: A National Social Enterprise Ecosystem

Ms. Khan used her platform not only to critique but to offer bold, actionable proposals. At the heart of her vision was the creation of a National Social Enterprise Policy, anchored in four core pillars:

- **Legal Recognition**

Introduce a new legal category for social enterprises that allows dual-objective registration profit and impact. This would offer flexibility and access to both private capital and public support.

- **Fiscal Incentives**

Provide tax exemptions, impact-linked procurement quotas, and investment subsidies for enterprises that meet environmental, gender, or community impact thresholds.

- **Social Enterprise Fund**

Establish a blended finance fund targeting youth and mid-career professionals who lack traditional collateral. The fund would support enterprises in climate adaptation, women's health, education, and green infrastructure.

- **Regional Incubation Hubs**

Partner with local governments, corporations, and universities to launch social enterprise incubation labs in underrepresented regions such as Gilgit-Baltistan, Tharparkar, and South Punjab.

Climate, Equity, and Enterprise: A Triple Mandate

Ms. Khan's keynote went beyond general entrepreneurship and focused sharply on climate-responsive, equity-driven business models. She argued that Pakistan's most urgent national priorities water security, clean air, waste management, and energy transition are also areas where social enterprises can lead.

“We must stop treating climate as a technical challenge it is a social and economic challenge that needs entrepreneurial imagination.”

She illustrated this with examples from recent Ministry partnerships:

- Solar Microgrid Enterprises in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where local entrepreneurs maintain off-grid energy systems.
- Waste-to-Income Ventures led by women's cooperatives in Karachi, converting solid waste into construction material.
- Climate Resilience Startups using AI to help farmers in Sindh predict seasonal crop threats.

These ventures, she explained, not only provide environmental value but also create dignified livelihoods, particularly for marginalized groups.

Public-Private Synergy: The Missing Middle

Ms. Khan called for a reimagining of the development model, one where the state is not just a regulator but a co-creator of innovation ecosystems. She criticized the outdated binary that separates "government" from "enterprise," proposing instead a synergistic middle ground.

Key elements of this model include:

- **Impact Procurement:** Government procurement policies should prioritize vendors with social or environmental missions.
- **Corporate-Government Alliances:** Firms such as Engro, Unilever, and Standard Chartered can co-invest in social ventures via PPP frameworks.
- **Mission-Driven Data Sharing:** Ministries should make anonymized public data accessible to social innovators—climate data, health records, educational access—to guide better product development.

She singled out Social Innovation Academy (SIA) as a model institution for how multi-sectoral collaboration can drive inclusive change.

Women at the Center: Inclusion as Infrastructure

A key focus of Ms. Khan's keynote was the systemic exclusion of women from formal economic participation. She revealed a sobering statistic: only 7% of Pakistani women have access to formal credit. Even fewer have access to business mentorship, digital tools, or procurement networks.

She proposed the following initiatives:

- Impact Fellowship for Women Entrepreneurs in green and care economies.
- Gender-Inclusive Investment Toolkits for investors and banks.
- Mandatory Gender Disclosures for all state-funded social enterprises.

Ms. Khan emphasized that equity is not a "soft" issue—it is a hard infrastructure issue. Without women in the ecosystem, social enterprise cannot scale or be truly representative.

Collaborative Action: A Roadmap for Stakeholders

In the final segment of her keynote, Ms. Khan laid out a practical roadmap, emphasizing that no single actor government, university, donor, or enterprise can build this system alone. She presented five coordinated action points:

1. Host a National Social Enterprise Policy Summit with participation from all provinces, civil society, and private sector representatives.
2. Launch a Climate-Enterprise Innovation Challenge, with cross-ministerial backing and venture support for scalable ideas.
3. Partner with SIA and PMYP to create a centralized registry and impact database of Pakistani social enterprises.
4. Engage with international partners especially UNFPA, UNDP, and the Islamic Development Bank to fund capacity-building, measurement frameworks, and joint ventures.
5. Mobilize Local Governments to act as first responders and first funders for community-led social ventures.

Dr. Faiz Shah

Director, Yunus Center

Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand

Title: *Social Business and the Redesign of Development Systems*

Introduction: From Beneficiaries to Co-Creators

At the heart of the Social Enterprise Summit 2025 stood a deeply reflective keynote by Prof. Faiz Shah, Director of the Yunus Center at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and a globally respected advocate of social business. With decades of experience at the nexus of academia, policy, and grassroots innovation, Prof. Shah offered a unique voice grounded in both intellectual rigor and moral clarity.

Titled “Social Business and the Redesign of Development Systems,” his keynote delivered a bold argument: development must no longer be designed “for” people—but “with” and “by” people. He began with this evocative challenge:

“Development has long been designed for people. It’s time we design development with people and more importantly, by people.”

This opening reframed the summit’s core theme of ecosystem building. It reminded participants that the future of impact work hinges not on scale alone, but on agency, values, and ownership.

The Yunus Legacy: Business as a Tool for Justice

Prof. Shah grounded his remarks in the pioneering work of Professor Muhammad Yunus, whose concept of social business reshaped global thinking on entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation. Drawing on his close collaborations with Prof. Yunus, he outlined the foundational principles of social business:

- A business created to solve a social problem.
- All profits are reinvested for impact, not distributed as dividends.
- It operates with financial self-sufficiency, without dependence on continuous aid.

“Every dollar given should become a dollar earned by a community.”

He emphasized the concept of “patient capital” and urged a reorientation of donor strategies toward revolving investments, warning that charity, while necessary, cannot substitute for structural change.

Reimagining Development Systems in Pakistan

Turning to the Pakistani context, Prof. Shah struck a hopeful yet urgent tone. He acknowledged that the country has no shortage of ingenuity but lacks structures that protect, scale, and replicate solutions born at the margins.

“Pakistan is not short of ideas. It is short of systems that protect, nurture, and scale those ideas.”



He outlined a roadmap to integrate social business into national development frameworks:

1. Revise Public Procurement Rules

Allow social enterprises to compete in state tenders—especially in sectors like health, sanitation, and renewable energy.

1. Establish Regulatory Sandboxes

Create legal spaces for experimentation in business models without fear of non-compliance penalties.

1. Tax Incentives for Social Profits

Encourage enterprises to reinvest earnings by providing tax relief on impact spending.

1. Link BISP/Ehsaas Programs to Enterprise Creation

Support beneficiaries in transitioning from welfare to entrepreneurship through training and startup seed grants.

Education as a Platform for Systemic Change

A major focus of Prof. Shah's keynote was the transformation of education not just in content, but in purpose. He argued that schools and universities must go beyond credentialing and begin preparing students to be system-builders.

He proposed:

- A National Curriculum on Social Enterprise and Ethics.
- Social Business Chairs in public universities.
- Dual degrees combining engineering or technology with social entrepreneurship.
- Mandatory enterprise practicums as part of undergraduate requirements.

"We must teach our youth not just to write business plans but to rewrite broken systems."

Drawing from pilot programs at AIT, he shared that interdisciplinary, values-based education significantly improved the sustainability of student-led enterprises especially in rural and post-conflict areas.

Legacy of Social Business and Muhammad Yunus

Prof. Shah shared lessons from his close collaborations with Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, underlining the evolution of the social business model from its Grameen Bank origins to global adaptation.

He clarified the principles of social business:

- A business designed to solve a social problem.
- Profits are reinvested for impact—not for personal gain.
- Operates in a financially self-sustaining manner.

These principles, he argued, must now inform development strategies, especially in the face of large-scale crises like youth unemployment, displacement, and ecological collapse.

He presented examples of successful social businesses nurtured by the Yunus Center in South Asia and Southeast Asia:

- A solar enterprise in Bangladesh that has electrified 2 million off-grid households.
- A rural eye-care center in Nepal using cross-subsidy models.
- A zero-dividend cooperative for women farmers in Thailand.

He further emphasized the transformative power of patient capital and the need to shift donor mindsets from charity to sustainability-focused investing. “Every dollar given should become a dollar earned by a community,” he noted, stressing the role of revolving social capital.

Localizing Systems Change in Pakistan

Prof. Shah pivoted his talk toward Pakistan, emphasizing that the country was “not short of ideas, but short of systems that protect, nurture, and scale those ideas.”

He outlined a roadmap to embed social business across national development planning:

- Revise public procurement rules to include social enterprises.
- Create regulatory sandboxes for social businesses to experiment and grow.
- Offer tax incentives for reinvested social profits.
- Link BISP and Ehsaas beneficiaries to social business creation pathways.

He particularly emphasized Balochistan and South Punjab as potential hubs for social business incubation, urging development agencies to integrate community-owned business models within climate resilience programs.

He also proposed collaborative frameworks between provincial governments, chambers of commerce, and universities to launch pilot zones for social enterprise regulation, supported by district-level impact evaluation units.

Education for Enterprise and Values

A significant part of Prof. Shah’s keynote focused on education reform. He advocated for embedding enterprise thinking and moral reasoning into academic curricula from school to university.

He proposed:

- A National Curriculum on Social Enterprise and Ethics.
- Establishment of Social Business Chairs in public universities.
- Introduction of dual degree programs in engineering and social entrepreneurship.
- Mandatory enterprise practicums for final-year undergraduates in all disciplines.

Citing pilot programs launched by AIT and the Yunus Center, he shared that interdisciplinary programs resulted in higher enterprise survival rates, especially in rural areas where graduates returned to their communities to start impact ventures. He emphasized that entrepreneurship is not simply a commercial activity but a mindset of agency and purpose:

“We must teach our youth not just to write business plans—but to rewrite broken systems.”

He also cautioned that entrepreneurship without ethics can replicate the same extractive logic of failing markets. “Every startup must ask: whose lives will this improve, and at what cost?”

Policy Dialogue and Regional Learning

As a policy advisor and academic, Prof. Shah stressed the need for regional cooperation and knowledge exchange:

- A Social Business Policy Forum should be established across OIC countries.
- Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia could co-lead a People’s Business Alliance focused on grassroots innovation.
- A Digital Library of Social Enterprise Cases should be curated and made publicly available across South Asia.

He proposed that Pakistan’s Planning Commission launch a Social Business Task Force in partnership with academia, civil society, and the private sector.

He also offered to host a Global South Social Enterprise Residency at AIT for young Pakistani changemakers, combining coursework, fieldwork, and mentorship.

Closing Reflections

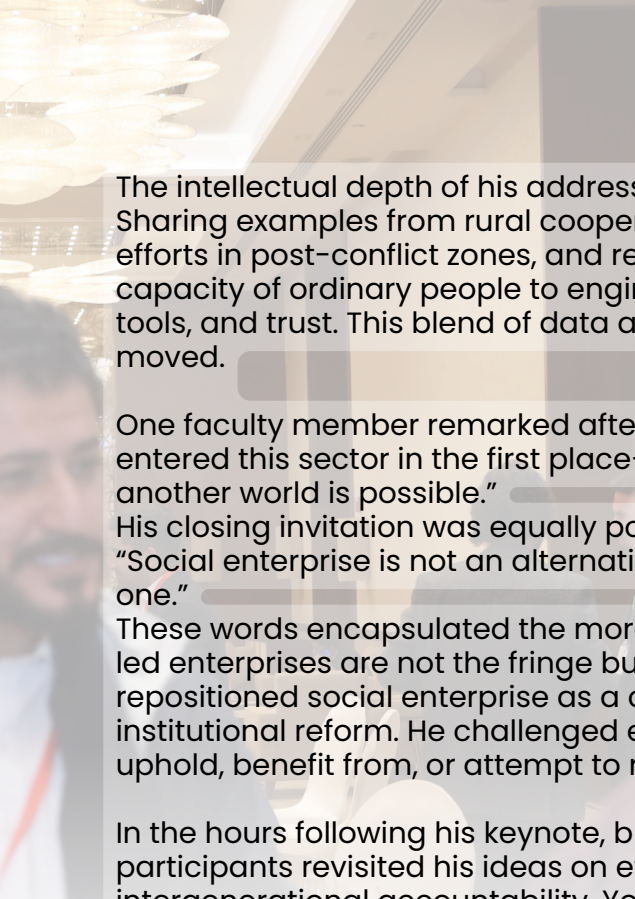
Prof. Shah concluded his keynote with a thought-provoking reflection on moral imagination and intergenerational responsibility:

“Our generation has consumed the planet, extracted from the poor, and digitized inequity. If we do not act now, our legacy will be one of silence. But if we act with courage and care, we can leave behind systems that serve.”

This resonant call moved the audience to a moment of reflective silence, followed by sustained applause. For many in the room—students, scholars, government advisors, and social entrepreneurs—Prof. Shah’s words were more than a speech; they were a mirror, reflecting the urgency and depth of the moment. His closing message seamlessly bridged the philosophical with the practical, invoking a collective sense of responsibility and agency.

The phrase “systems that serve” became an anchoring metaphor, repeated in subsequent sessions and informal dialogues throughout the summit. For youth participants especially, this call was transformative. Many described it as their first encounter with a framework that placed moral clarity and social innovation in the same breath. Delegates from international organizations called it “one of the most emotionally intelligent keynotes of the decade,” citing how Prof. Shah grounded macroeconomic discourse in the emotional truths of inequality, climate crisis, and generational rupture.

His critique of extractive economies and digitized inequity was not merely rhetorical. Prof. Shah drew connections between the failures of existing institutions and the erosion of civic trust, urging summit participants to rebuild legitimacy through models of radical inclusion, community-based finance, and participatory governance. His focus on humility in development practice—recognizing that impact must be co-owned, not delivered—struck a chord with practitioners in the room.



The intellectual depth of his address was complemented by heartfelt storytelling. Sharing examples from rural cooperatives in Southeast Asia, grassroots education efforts in post-conflict zones, and refugee-led startups, Prof. Shah illustrated the capacity of ordinary people to engineer extraordinary solutions when given dignity, tools, and trust. This blend of data and narrative left many in the room visibly moved.

One faculty member remarked afterward, “It was like being reminded why we entered this sector in the first place—not for funding cycles, but for a belief that another world is possible.”

His closing invitation was equally powerful:

“Social enterprise is not an alternative economy—it is the future of a sustainable one.”

These words encapsulated the moral core of SES 2025. By suggesting that impact-led enterprises are not the fringe but the foundation of a just economy, Prof. Shah repositioned social enterprise as a central pillar of developmental policy and institutional reform. He challenged every participant to rethink the systems they uphold, benefit from, or attempt to reform.

In the hours following his keynote, breakout sessions echoed his themes. Several participants revisited his ideas on ethical design, systems regeneration, and intergenerational accountability. Young leaders, in particular, gravitated to the idea that their future need not be inherited—it can be co-created.

The closing reflections of Prof. Faiz Shah’s address served as a deep exhale after a summit filled with tactical insights, startup pitches, and partnership proposals. His words pulled participants back to the ethical ‘why’ behind the work. As the summit moved into its final stages, his remarks became a moral compass, helping shape the way forward with courage, clarity, and conscience.

4. Panel Discussions

Panel 1: Building Inclusive Innovation Ecosystems

Theme: Strengthening Institutional Pathways for Social Enterprise in Pakistan

Moderator: Dr. Maria Kiran, Director of Strategic Partnerships, UNDP

Panelists:

- Dr. Asim Khwaja – Professor of International Finance and Development, Harvard Kennedy School
- Ms. Hina Khalid – Director, National Incubation Center (NIC), Islamabad
- Mr. Shahid Rahim – Lead Economist, PPAF
- Ms. Areej Memon – Founder, Code4Equity

This panel was designed to dissect and reconstruct what it means to create genuinely inclusive innovation ecosystems. Pakistan’s social enterprise landscape is young but filled with potential—yet it remains fragmented. The panel addressed structural bottlenecks and envisioned holistic pathways to unlock opportunity for underserved communities.

Dr. Asim Khwaja began with a bold statement: “Inclusion cannot be an afterthought. It must be designed from day zero.” He presented new data from his ongoing research at Harvard showing how centralized financing systems often fail to empower the periphery. He proposed a decentralization toolkit tailored for Pakistani policymakers, rooted in behavioral science. One highlight included a three-tier model where local governments serve as innovation anchors, community organizations manage outreach, and universities lead capability-building. He also proposed that HEC and provincial governments launch a pilot for a bottom-up research and enterprise accelerator in three rural districts.

Ms. Hina Khalid offered a rich, field-driven perspective by mapping NIC’s transition from urban-centric programming to rural-integrated solutions. She introduced the term “entrepreneurship equity” and explained how NIC’s diagnostic tools help identify gaps in gender participation, skill absorption, and tech readiness. Her spotlight on NIC-Turbat was particularly powerful—demonstrating that even in resource-scarce environments, a co-designed model can thrive if it’s grounded in trust and lived realities. She also highlighted NIC’s new policy toolkit titled “Equity by Design” for incubation managers working in low-income regions.

Mr. Shahid Rahim zoomed in on procurement as a lever of change. He argued that the true test of inclusive ecosystems lies in how institutions spend their money. With compelling visualizations, he showed how less than 2% of government procurement goes to mission-driven enterprises. He proposed an Inclusive Procurement Policy for provincial governments, which would mandate inclusion scoring in public tenders. He also highlighted the potential of Digital Procurement Labs as collaborative spaces to test new models. He committed PPAF’s technical team to support two pilot labs in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning.

Ms. Areej Memon’s insights captivated the room. As a young founder, her narrative was more than inspirational—it was instructive. She chronicled how her initiative, Code4Equity, faced resistance not just from institutions but also from communities hesitant to adopt unfamiliar frameworks. Her breakthrough came when she blended indigenous knowledge—like oral histories and folk problem-solving—with coding pedagogy. Her model now serves over 300 girls in interior Sindh and is being adapted for Afghan refugee camps. She emphasized that innovation must include “epistemic equity”—a respect for diverse forms of knowledge beyond mainstream tech paradigms.

The Q&A session illuminated several recurring issues: weak university-industry linkages, limited grassroots capital flows, and the urban bias of incubator infrastructure. Panelists responded with concrete solutions—like creating district-level “enterprise lighthouses” and using zakat funds for startup grants in vulnerable areas. One proposal from the audience included embedding entrepreneurship curricula in madrassahs and vocational institutes to drive early-stage enterprise literacy.



Dr. Kiran facilitated a 15-minute mini-workshop during the panel, using scenario mapping to help participants envision ideal inclusive ecosystems. Teams of university students, local government officials, and donor representatives created mock roadmaps for their regions. One group from KP designed a social enterprise loop integrating madrassahs, vocational centers, and export consortia—a model that drew enthusiastic praise. The Sindh group designed a women-led innovation hub that included childcare cooperatives, micro-grants, and hybrid skills centers co-hosted by universities and local businesses.

In a spontaneous collaboration announcement, NIC and PPAF committed to developing a provincial dashboard on Inclusive Innovation Indicators. Harvard's Center for International Development also expressed interest in piloting a policy innovation lab in Islamabad, focused on inclusive entrepreneurship. Three universities—BUIITEMS, IBA Sukkur, and University of Peshawar—agreed to form a working group for piloting regional impact innovation labs with support from SIA and PMYP.

To wrap up, a live commitment board was activated. More than 40 individuals—including three vice-chancellors—signed up to co-develop inclusion-focused modules within their institutions. The audience buzzed with follow-up meetings and side-bar discussions, indicating momentum that extended well beyond the panel's timeframe. International delegates also showed interest in replicating some of the presented models in Jordan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria.

Dr. Kiran's final words captured the panel's spirit: "Innovation becomes inclusive when it stops being a privilege and starts being a practice. We're not just convening ideas today—we're cultivating institutions."

Panel 1 thus set the tone for SES 2025's operational focus—moving from ecosystem analysis to ecosystem engineering. With robust dialogue, institutional pledges, academic cooperation, and an atmosphere of co-creation, this session laid the intellectual, institutional, and moral groundwork for the summit's success.



Moderator: Muhammad Shah Khan (NIC Quetta)

Key Themes:

- Policy gaps and need for tax incentives
- ROI-focused models and investor confidence
- Accelerators' role in mentorship and scale
- Financial products for underserved women and youth
- Social cohesion, equity, and financial literacy

Summary: Panel 2 focused on reimagining the structural, financial, and regulatory conditions necessary to support a thriving ecosystem for social enterprises across Pakistan. Moderated by Muhammad Shah Khan of NIC Quetta, this high-impact session explored barriers and breakthrough opportunities to institutionalize ecosystem-level support for social innovation.

Opening Remarks: Muhammad Shah Khan began the session by emphasizing the unique challenges faced by social enterprises, particularly those working outside urban centers. Drawing from his experience at NIC Quetta, he shared examples where entrepreneurs lacked access not only to capital but also to technical mentorship, regulatory clarity, and supportive networks. He stressed the importance of designing context-specific solutions, citing NIC's recent initiative supporting youth-run startups in Panjgur and Gwadar that combine digital innovation with traditional crafts.

Panelist Contributions: The discussion began with a review of the policy vacuum that currently hampers the growth of social enterprises in Pakistan. Panelists called for a clear and inclusive policy framework recognizing social enterprises as a distinct legal category. This would provide access to tax incentives, social impact grants, and blended finance instruments. Several speakers noted that the lack of a defined status limits investor confidence, restricts scale, and often excludes mission-driven businesses from government or donor-backed enterprise programs. One panelist introduced a comparative analysis of regional models—highlighting how countries like Malaysia and the UK have developed legal identities for social enterprises. These frameworks include tax exemptions, simplified reporting for small enterprises, and certification schemes that verify community impact. Such models, if adapted locally, could empower thousands of grassroots entrepreneurs across Pakistan.

ROI-Focused Models and Investor Confidence: Discussion turned toward the need for balancing financial returns with social impact. The traditional venture capital model was deemed insufficient for measuring the dual bottom lines that social enterprises pursue. Instead, panelists advocated for hybrid Return on Investment (ROI) models that incorporate social Return on Investment (SROI) and community benefit indexes.



Speakers urged Pakistani development finance institutions (DFIs) and commercial banks to update risk evaluation models. A representative from a major impact fund shared how their firm developed a “Community-Adjusted IRR” metric, factoring in metrics such as women’s participation, environmental savings, and jobs created in low-income regions. The audience responded enthusiastically to this idea, suggesting HEC and SECP collaborate on developing a national SROI standard.

Accelerators and Mentorship: The role of accelerators emerged as a key theme. Accelerators in Pakistan often struggle to move beyond urban-centric programming. Panelists proposed a ‘Hub-and-Spoke’ model where central accelerators in major cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad partner with regional incubators in smaller cities and rural areas. These collaborations would allow for:

- Localization of curriculum and mentorship
- Remote mentoring and digital demo days
- Shared access to capital and investor networks

Muhammad Shah Khan shared that NIC Quetta has already piloted this model by supporting impact startups in Zhob and Kharan through mobile incubation clinics. He noted that entrepreneurs in remote areas require additional non-financial support, such as training in governance, compliance, and storytelling for impact.

Financial Products for Underserved Groups: Another critical focus was on inclusive financial products. Panelists emphasized that current banking structures and collateral requirements often exclude young and female entrepreneurs. Suggestions included the creation of Shariah-compliant micro-equity products, rotating social funds for first-time entrepreneurs, and the bundling of financial products with mentoring services.

A female-led enterprise shared their success story of launching a social business through a gender-specific micro-loan supported by a digital mentorship circle. The panel agreed that inclusion must be proactive, not incidental, and that financial institutions must design products around the lived realities of their customers.

Social Cohesion, Equity, and Financial Literacy: Speakers addressed the connection between enterprise development and social cohesion. By embedding social values in business education and promoting financial literacy at the community level, enterprises can become engines of peacebuilding and resilience. Examples from southern Punjab and KP were shared, where enterprise-led projects decreased inter-communal tensions by providing shared economic opportunities. A financial literacy curriculum for adolescent girls launched in Gilgit-Baltistan was highlighted as an innovative model to replicate. Panelists noted that building trust through community-led design is essential for long-term ecosystem health.



Social Enterprise Ecosystem in Pakistan

Recommendations:

1. **Establish a Social Enterprise Fund:** A blended finance mechanism offering tiered grants, seed funding, and equity for mission-driven startups. Government institutions should allocate annual budgets through this fund.
2. **Create Social Innovation Hubs:** These hubs should serve as regional nodes for research, incubation, policy innovation, and mentorship. At least one hub per province is recommended.
3. **Enhance Impact Measurement:** Introduce a national index to track impact performance. Provide universities and accelerators with toolkits and training in metrics like SROI, GIIRS, and SDG-aligned evaluation.
4. **Promote Blended Finance and Fintech Tools:** Encourage partnerships between regulators and fintech startups to co-develop ethical lending tools, mobile banking products for women, and blockchain-led transparency dashboards.

Conclusion: The panel concluded with a robust and participatory dialogue that extended well beyond the scheduled time, reflecting the urgency and enthusiasm surrounding this topic. A lively Q&A session allowed participants from universities, startups, donor agencies, and government bodies to voice concerns, seek clarifications, and contribute ideas.

One participant from a provincial SME board emphasized the need for integrating ecosystem support mechanisms into provincial development plans. Another attendee, a startup founder from interior Sindh, raised the need for multilingual mentorship content and community-based funding models that match local contexts.

The moderator summarized key action points by encouraging stakeholders to commit to inter-institutional dialogue. He proposed a quarterly “Ecosystem Builders Roundtable” hosted by NICs and university innovation offices to keep momentum alive.

There was unanimous agreement that collaboration—not competition—will define the success of Pakistan’s impact sector. The summit’s environment provided fertile ground for initiating such cross-sectoral partnerships.

In his final remarks, Muhammad Shah Khan urged, “Let’s not wait for perfect conditions. Let’s start building now—with whatever we have, wherever we are. The social enterprise revolution will not come from boardrooms alone—it will rise from classrooms, community centers, and code farms in our smallest towns.”

This panel not only synthesized a wide spectrum of ecosystem gaps and opportunities but also created a participatory blueprint for institutional action. From policy to practice, the discussion reaffirmed that building a supportive ecosystem for social enterprises requires inclusive design, cross-sector partnerships, measurable outcomes, and a spirit of trust and innovation.



5. Breakout Sessions

Breakout Session 1: Climate Change & Green Economy

The first breakout session at SES 2025 focused on one of the most pressing global challenges—climate change—and its intersection with social enterprise in the context of a green economy. The session was attended by practitioners, researchers, policymakers, youth leaders, and entrepreneurs working on innovative climate solutions. The diversity of attendees made for a dynamic and multi-layered discussion.

Session Overview:

The session opened with a presentation outlining the principles of the circular economy—where waste is minimized and resources are reused, regenerated, or repurposed for continuous use. The speaker highlighted examples from both global and Pakistani contexts, such as community composting initiatives in Karachi and plastic-to-pavement pilot projects in Lahore.

A major focus was sustainable packaging. Entrepreneurs presented ideas around biodegradable packaging derived from sugarcane, banana fibers, and rice husk. One startup shared how they had collaborated with artisans in interior Sindh to create recyclable and culturally branded reusable bags, turning a climate solution into a livelihood opportunity. This drew applause and sparked a wider conversation on linking traditional knowledge systems with eco-innovation.

Community-Based Climate Adaptation: The discussion moved toward adaptation strategies rooted in local contexts. Participants emphasized that communities must be seen not just as beneficiaries but as knowledge holders and partners in resilience. Presenters shared successful models from Balochistan where flood-prone villages adopted low-tech water harvesting systems co-designed by local masons and engineers. Another initiative discussed was women-led micro-grids in coastal regions of Thatta, where solar panels and battery storage have dramatically improved energy security.

Panelists stressed the need for integrating such practices into district-level planning processes. It was proposed that local governments work with social enterprises to map vulnerabilities and co-design solutions. Several youth participants voiced concerns over the lack of coordination among ministries dealing with environment, energy, and community development—calling for a national Climate-Social Enterprise Taskforce.

Green Entrepreneurship and Investment Gaps:

The session also addressed the gap in investment and support for green entrepreneurship. Speakers identified the need for:

- Green startup funds with concessional terms.
- Accelerators dedicated to climate-focused ventures.
- Technical mentorship on eco-certifications and carbon offset strategies.

A highlight was the presentation of a climate-focused incubator model launched in partnership with a European donor agency and a Pakistani business school. The incubator supports green startups with not only capital but also climate science workshops, environmental impact assessment training, and investor pitch days focused solely on the green economy.

Youth and Climate Literacy:

The youth segment of the session addressed climate literacy as a foundational requirement for building a green economy. Participants called for:

- Integrating climate change education in all university curriculums.
- Establishing Green Labs in universities to test climate technologies.
- Launching a nationwide 'Green Fellows' program for young climate leaders.

The session concluded with breakout group discussions on SDG-aligned project ideas. Each group pitched a concept to the audience, ranging from eco-tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan to upcycling waste textiles in Karachi. Feedback from mentors and fellow participants provided a learning-rich experience and actionable insights.

Key Takeaways:

1. Climate adaptation must be co-designed with communities, recognizing their lived knowledge.
2. Circular economy models can be rooted in traditional practices and scaled through innovation.
3. Institutional support for green entrepreneurs is currently inadequate and requires urgent redress through public-private collaboration.
4. Climate literacy, especially among youth, is vital to shaping a future workforce aligned with sustainability principles.
5. The potential of green social enterprises lies not only in environmental outcomes but also in their ability to generate equitable livelihoods, social cohesion, and policy innovation.

Breakout Session 1 demonstrated that tackling climate change through social enterprise requires multi-sectoral collaboration, grassroots innovation, and an enabling ecosystem that puts people and planet at the center of economic transformation.



Breakout Session 2: Health & Wellbeing

This breakout session focused on the intersection of social enterprise, health-tech innovation, and community-based wellbeing strategies. It brought together stakeholders from public health institutions, tech startups, universities, and development agencies to explore scalable solutions for healthcare access and mental health challenges in underserved areas.

Session Overview:

The session opened with a keynote-style overview of the healthcare landscape in Pakistan, highlighting disparities in service delivery between urban and rural populations, the overburdened public health system, and the increasing need for digital interventions to reach last-mile communities.

Participants were introduced to emerging models of health-tech social enterprises, particularly those operating in telemedicine, AI-assisted diagnostics, mobile clinics, and community-based mental health platforms. Presenters from the Digital Health Alliance and local health innovators illustrated how cloud-based health records, SMS-based appointment booking, and teleconsultation portals are transforming how healthcare is accessed and managed.

Mental Health and Social Innovation:

One of the most pressing sub-themes was mental health—an often neglected but critical aspect of wellbeing. The session featured impactful narratives from youth-led initiatives such as mobile counseling apps, helpline services for survivors of violence, and on-campus peer therapy programs. Experts emphasized the need for:

- Integrating mental health screening in primary care settings.
- Public-private partnerships to scale affordable digital mental health tools.
- National awareness campaigns to reduce stigma.

Several presenters called for the establishment of a "Social Innovation Fund for Mental Health" to support ventures addressing depression, anxiety, and trauma—particularly in post-conflict zones and disaster-affected communities.

Community-Based Healthcare Models:

The session also featured successful case studies of decentralized healthcare delivery. Notable among them was a maternal and child health initiative in interior Sindh leveraging female community health workers equipped with digital tablets to monitor pregnancies, deliver health education, and report emergencies.

Another innovative model discussed was a mobile diagnostic van project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, using solar-powered equipment to offer lab tests in remote areas.

These ventures showcased how localized health innovation can dramatically reduce travel costs, improve diagnosis timelines, and promote trust within communities.

Bridging Policy and Technology:

A robust discussion ensued around the regulatory environment for digital health. Concerns were raised about data privacy, medical ethics, and the need for unified standards. Several panelists proposed the creation of a "National Telehealth Regulation Framework" with multi-sector input.

Participants also called on the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to fund research on health-tech and to incentivize universities to partner with social enterprises for health-related pilot programs.

Health Equity and Inclusion:

The breakout group emphasized inclusive healthcare design, calling for:

- Universal Health Literacy campaigns targeting rural populations.
- Translation of digital health tools into regional languages.
- Accessibility audits of mobile health platforms.

Female participants highlighted the unique barriers women face in accessing care, including cultural taboos, mobility constraints, and the lack of gender-sensitive health services. A recommendation was made for all health social enterprises to adopt a “Gender+ Lens” during product and program design.

Key Takeaways:

1. Health-tech social enterprises can bridge the urban-rural divide, especially in diagnostics and consultation.
2. Mental health innovation requires both funding and policy support to become a mainstream concern.
3. Localized, low-cost delivery models—such as community health workers and mobile clinics—are highly effective and scalable.
4. Regulatory clarity and ethical safeguards are essential to the responsible growth of the digital health ecosystem.
5. Health equity must be embedded in all stages of social innovation, from ideation to implementation.

Breakout Session 2 highlighted that healthcare transformation in Pakistan will not be led by hospitals alone—but through a vibrant ecosystem of social innovators, digital tools, and empowered communities.

Breakout Session 3: Technology & Innovation

This session served as a vibrant showcase of how technological advancements can be harnessed for social impact. Participants from academia, startups, government, and civil society gathered to explore the responsible application of cutting-edge technologies—particularly artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), and mobile platforms—to solve entrenched social challenges.

Session Overview:

Moderated by a representative from NIC Islamabad, the session opened with a powerful framing: "Technology in itself is neutral. It is the values we embed in it that make it inclusive or extractive." This set the tone for a forward-looking, yet ethically grounded conversation.

Presenters highlighted real-world examples where emerging technologies are being used for education access, climate action, public health outreach, and transparency in aid delivery. A youth-led startup from Swat showcased their blockchain-based donation tracker that ensures transparency in charitable giving, which received widespread appreciation.

Artificial Intelligence for Social Good:

Speakers emphasized the potential of AI to power predictive analytics for poverty mapping, disease surveillance, and educational support systems. One case study involved a machine learning model that analyzed community-level data to predict dropout risks in rural schools, enabling targeted interventions.

Discussions also addressed the risks of algorithmic bias and surveillance. Panelists stressed the need for local datasets, ethical AI design, and policy oversight mechanisms.

Blockchain and Financial Inclusion:

Innovators demonstrated how blockchain is enabling transparent and auditable cash transfers to displaced populations. One speaker from a fintech social enterprise in Karachi shared how smart contracts were being used to facilitate micro-insurance for gig economy workers and informal sector women entrepreneurs.

The group debated the scalability and environmental footprint of blockchain technologies, concluding that hybrid approaches (blockchain + SMS/USSD-based tools) are most suitable for Pakistan's digital infrastructure.

Youth-Centric Digital Literacy Frameworks:

A major theme of the session was youth digital empowerment. Presenters critiqued the current state of digital literacy education in public schools and proposed a new framework centered on:

- Ethical tech use
- Creative problem-solving using digital tools
- Coding for social impact
- Digital entrepreneurship labs in rural colleges

NIC Quetta shared outcomes of its pilot program in Balochistan, where female students learned app development and launched health-awareness platforms within their communities.

Tech Entrepreneurship and Policy Gaps:

The breakout session addressed regulatory hurdles facing early-stage tech entrepreneurs. These include:

- Lack of startup-friendly tax regimes
- Inconsistent cyber policies
- Limited access to patient capital

Recommendations included establishing regional tech sandboxes, reforming intellectual property laws, and offering impact-linked subsidies for startups solving SDG-aligned problems.

Digital Inclusion and Equity:

A cross-cutting concern was the digital divide—especially for women, persons with disabilities, and remote areas. Presenters advocated for:

- Inclusive UX/UI design in all social tech products
- Community co-design of digital tools
- Localization of platforms into regional languages

One impactful story came from a young developer in Gilgit who created a sign-language-enabled video library to teach science to deaf children—a project now being piloted in multiple provinces.

Key Takeaways:

1. Emerging technologies must be contextualized to the social, cultural, and infrastructure realities of Pakistan.
2. Ethical frameworks, local data, and public-private partnerships are essential to scaling AI and blockchain responsibly.
3. Youth are both the largest users and future architects of technology—investment in digital literacy is therefore a national imperative.
4. Inclusive design is not optional; it must be foundational.
5. Regulatory reforms and financial incentives can unlock a new wave of socially driven tech entrepreneurship.

The breakout sessions at SES 2025 were a dynamic demonstration of how multi-sector dialogue, local leadership, and cross-cutting innovation converge to build solutions for complex development challenges. Across all four sessions—Climate Change & Green Economy, Health & Wellbeing, Technology & Innovation, and Gender & Inclusive Enterprise—participants underscored the necessity of moving from theory to implementation, from ideas to impact.

A unifying thread across the sessions was the emphasis on co-creation. Whether through community-led adaptation strategies in climate action, peer-designed mental health apps, inclusive UX design in tech, or grassroots enterprise networks for women, participants repeatedly called for development approaches that are human-centered, locally rooted, and context-responsive.

Another key insight was the need for enabling infrastructure. Breakout groups in all sessions highlighted regulatory bottlenecks, financial exclusion, and knowledge gaps that limit the scalability of social innovation. Recommendations included establishing:

- Dedicated green and health innovation funds
- National regulatory frameworks for emerging technologies
- Blended finance tools that democratize access to capital
- Inclusive policies tailored to intersectional groups

There was also strong consensus on the importance of youth engagement. Young participants not only presented pioneering ideas—from climate-smart tourism to AI for school retention—but also actively shaped the discourse through critical questioning and community-led pilot models. Youth were seen not just as beneficiaries but as co-creators and future custodians of inclusive, sustainable innovation.

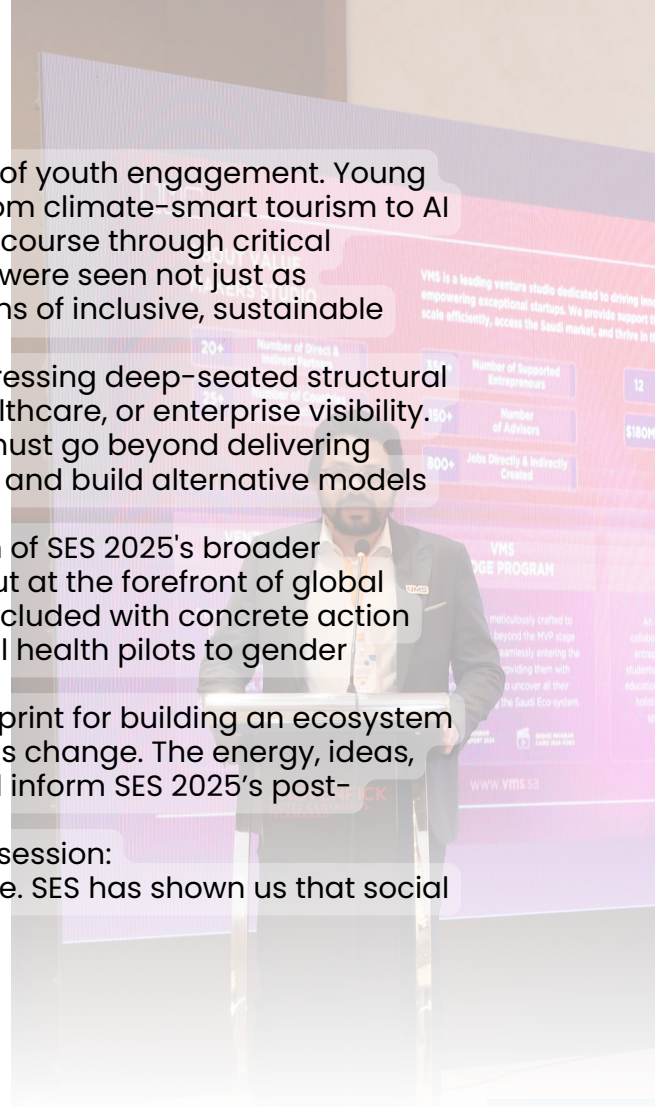
Importantly, the sessions did not shy away from addressing deep-seated structural inequities—whether in land rights, digital access, healthcare, or enterprise visibility. The collective realization was that social enterprise must go beyond delivering services—it must also challenge inequitable systems and build alternative models rooted in justice, dignity, and shared prosperity.

Finally, the breakout sessions served as a microcosm of SES 2025's broader ambition: to position Pakistan not on the periphery but at the forefront of global conversations on social innovation. Each session concluded with concrete action points, ranging from university Green Labs and digital health pilots to gender impact indices and ethical AI protocols.

Together, the breakout discussions generated a blueprint for building an ecosystem that nurtures social enterprises as vehicles of systems change. The energy, ideas, and commitments emerging from these sessions will inform SES 2025's post-summit action plan and ongoing learning networks.

As one youth delegate aptly summarized in the final session:

"We came here with questions. We leave with purpose. SES has shown us that social enterprise is not just a sector—it's a movement."



6. Impact Startup Challenge

Out of over 300 applications received from across Pakistan and beyond, 30 promising social enterprises were shortlisted for the Impact Startup Challenge 2025. The rigorous selection process involved a screening of business models, impact metrics, team potential, and scalability. These 30 startups underwent a structured mentorship bootcamp and eventually, ten finalists earned the opportunity to pitch live before an esteemed jury of investors, development partners, and accelerator representatives.

The final pitch session was the highlight of the summit's entrepreneurial stream. Each of the ten teams had five minutes to present their venture, followed by Q&A from the panel. The energy in the room was palpable as young changemakers took the stage to present innovations spanning fintech, water filtration, sustainable textiles, education, agriculture, and more.

Winning Ventures:

1. **Paymo** – A digital payment gateway tailored to micro-entrepreneurs, particularly street vendors and home-based workers. Paymo's innovation lies in its simplified app interface that works in low-connectivity areas and offers a direct link between informal workers and mobile banking solutions. By digitizing cash flow for small-scale sellers, it enhances traceability and opens up access to credit history.
2. **The Natural Fiber Company** – An eco-textile social enterprise that transforms agricultural waste such as banana stems and hemp into high-quality biodegradable fabric. Working with women artisans from rural Sindh, the startup not only addresses environmental concerns in fashion but also creates dignified income streams.
3. **NanoDrop** – A clean water innovation that uses nanotechnology to build compact and affordable water filtration units. The team has piloted the device in schools and healthcare centers in Balochistan, demonstrating measurable reductions in waterborne illnesses. NanoDrop's business model includes franchise-based distribution through local youth cooperatives.

Prizes and Support:

The three winning teams were awarded a total of PKR 1.5 million in seed funding, alongside:

- Customized mentorship packages from leading social enterprise coaches
- Six-month incubation opportunities at top accelerators including NIC Quetta, Impact Hub Karachi, and Arweqah Labs
- Access to international exposure trips and pitch competitions through summit partners
- Feature articles in OCT Daily and regional media platforms

Runner-Up Startups and Special Mentions: Beyond the top three, the jury awarded special recognition to:

- **EduShare**: For their peer-to-peer platform enabling rural students to access digitized academic resources.
- **RuralRoots**: For integrating climate-resilient agricultural practices with mobile learning.
- **MobiClinic**: For their solar-powered mobile healthcare delivery model.

Each of these ventures received in-kind support including legal advisory, branding workshops, and investor matchmaking sessions.

7. Closing Ceremony and Way Forward

The SES 2025 Closing Ceremony marked not just the end of a vibrant summit, but the beginning of a long-term journey toward institutionalizing social innovation and enterprise in Pakistan. The session was presided over by Dr. Babur, Executive Director of the Social Innovation Academy (SIA), alongside distinguished guests including Mr. Rana Mashhood, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), and representatives from UNFPA, Arweqah Alreyadah, and VMS.

Reflections and Gratitude

Dr. Babur opened the ceremony by expressing heartfelt gratitude to all partners, speakers, moderators, participants, and volunteers who made SES 2025 a success. He emphasized that the Summit had moved beyond dialogue and served as a laboratory of collaborative action. With over 500 in-person attendees and 10,000+ digital viewers, the summit had truly sparked a nationwide movement around social enterprise.

"What we saw here was not just potential—it was action. Now is the time to sustain it." — Dr. Babur

UNFPA representatives commended the summit's integration of gender equity, youth engagement, and community resilience. They reaffirmed their commitment to co-develop national programs that embed social enterprise principles into development and humanitarian efforts.

Mr. Rana Mashhood highlighted the synergy between PMYP and SES. He called for an expansion of youth incubation hubs, particularly in underrepresented areas such as southern Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Balochistan. He also proposed allocating a dedicated budget line within PMYP for supporting early-stage social entrepreneurs.

Key Future Directions

The ceremony served as a launchpad for several next-phase initiatives that will define the post-summit trajectory:

1. Formal Launch of the National Social Enterprise Policy Forum

A multi-stakeholder body will be established to advocate for enabling policies. It will bring together HEC, SECP, Ministry of Planning, donors, and private sector actors to co-create a National Social Enterprise Framework.

2. Cross-Border Mentoring & Research Collaborations

The Summit formalized three institutional partnerships:

- SIA and Arweqah Alreyadah for joint fellowships and entrepreneurship residencies in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.
- SIA and Yunus Center at AIT for research on ethical markets and policy labs.
- SIA and NIC Quetta for a rural social enterprise acceleration program.

3. Regional Social Enterprise Summits

Building on the success of SES Islamabad, plans were announced for:

- SES Quetta 2025 focusing on eco-tourism, indigenous crafts, and youth enterprise
- SES Peshawar 2026 centering on climate, migration, and resilience entrepreneurship

4. SES Impact Tracker Portal

An online knowledge and collaboration hub will be launched to track progress, share case studies, offer resources, and connect practitioners across Pakistan and the region.

1.

Participant Recognition and Cultural Segment

The closing also included a recognition ceremony for high-impact sessions and contributors. Awards were given to top facilitators, youth fellows, and partner organizations. A special citation was awarded to The Natural Fiber Company for its triple-bottom-line impact.

To celebrate the diversity of Pakistan, the evening concluded with a short cultural performance featuring regional music and storytelling. This underscored the summit's ethos: that sustainable development must be rooted in both innovation and identity.

Final Thoughts and Collective Commitment

Each partner and speaker was invited to share a one-line pledge for the future. Some of the most memorable ones included:

"I pledge to mentor one youth-led social enterprise every quarter."

"Our university will launch a gender-inclusive impact lab within six months."

"We will publish Pakistan's first Social Enterprise Investment Guide."

Dr. Babur concluded the summit with a collective affirmation:

"SES is not a one-time event. It is a commitment. A shared resolve that we—the practitioners, policy influencers, academics, and young changemakers—will build the ecosystem our country deserves."

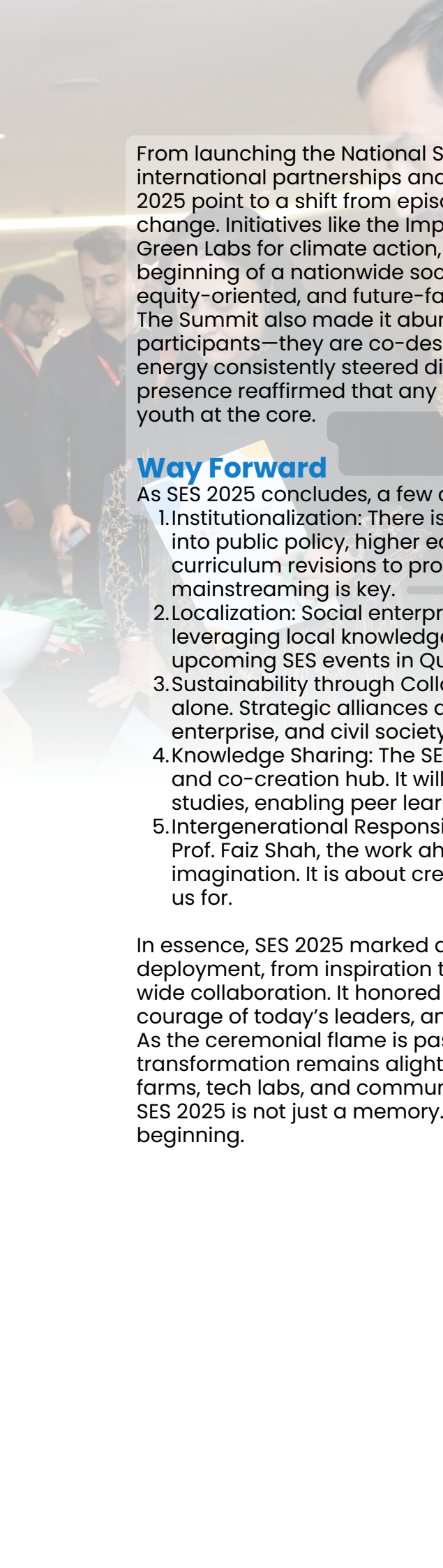
The audience rose in a final round of applause, signaling not just an end, but a beginning. The closing ceremony set the tone for a nationwide mobilization where social enterprise is not the alternative—it is the imperative.

Conclusion:

The Social Enterprise Summit (SES) 2025 emerged not just as a convening space but as a catalytic platform for long-term systems transformation in Pakistan. With its cross-sectoral engagement, youth-centric approach, and deep policy linkages, SES 2025 served as a defining milestone in the nation's inclusive development journey.

The Summit successfully brought together over 500 participants in person, and thousands more virtually, representing the full spectrum of the social innovation ecosystem—government institutions, universities, development partners, youth organizations, private sector leaders, social entrepreneurs, and grassroots practitioners. Their collective voice and shared aspirations gave rise to a vibrant tapestry of knowledge exchange, policy visioning, and practical roadmaps for change.

One of the most powerful elements of SES 2025 was its intentional diversity. Whether in keynote addresses or breakout sessions, the dialogue remained deeply inclusive—featuring perspectives from underserved provinces, differently abled innovators, female founders, and student leaders. This intersectionality did more than enrich the conversation—it redefined what social innovation looks like in a Pakistani context.

A background image showing a group of people, including men and women, engaged in a discussion or presentation at what appears to be a formal event or summit. They are standing around a table, looking at documents or devices.

From launching the National Social Enterprise Policy Forum to formalizing international partnerships and announcing regional summits, the outcomes of SES 2025 point to a shift from episodic engagement to structured, institutionalized change. Initiatives like the Impact Startup Challenge, cross-border research labs, Green Labs for climate action, and gender-inclusive innovation hubs mark the beginning of a nationwide social enterprise movement that is evidence-informed, equity-oriented, and future-facing.

The Summit also made it abundantly clear that young people are not just participants—they are co-designers of the future. Their ventures, insights, and energy consistently steered discussions toward urgency, creativity, and hope. Their presence reaffirmed that any roadmap to sustainability must be authored with youth at the core.

Way Forward

As SES 2025 concludes, a few critical imperatives emerge:

1. **Institutionalization:** There is a pressing need to formally embed social enterprise into public policy, higher education, and development frameworks. From HEC's curriculum revisions to provincial planning bodies' inclusion of impact metrics, mainstreaming is key.
2. **Localization:** Social enterprise models must be tailored to regional contexts—leveraging local knowledge, cultural assets, and ground-level partnerships. The upcoming SES events in Quetta and Peshawar reflect this commitment.
3. **Sustainability through Collaboration:** No single actor can transform systems alone. Strategic alliances across sectors—academia, government, private enterprise, and civil society—will be essential to sustaining momentum.
4. **Knowledge Sharing:** The SES Impact Tracker Portal will serve as a living archive and co-creation hub. It will democratize access to insights, tools, and case studies, enabling peer learning at scale.
5. **Intergenerational Responsibility:** As emphasized by several speakers, including Prof. Faiz Shah, the work ahead is not just about innovation—it is about moral imagination. It is about creating systems that our future generations will thank us for.

In essence, SES 2025 marked a transition—from problem diagnosis to solution deployment, from inspiration to execution, and from siloed initiatives to ecosystem-wide collaboration. It honored the struggles of changemakers past, celebrated the courage of today's leaders, and lit the path for the visionaries of tomorrow.

As the ceremonial flame is passed on to SES Quetta 2025, the torch of transformation remains alight. The work continues—in classrooms, boardrooms, farms, tech labs, and communities across Pakistan.

SES 2025 is not just a memory. It is a movement. And the movement is only beginning.

8. Conclusion

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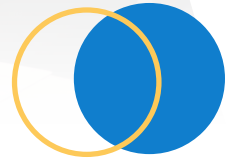
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9. Summit Photos Highlights



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