



Educational System in Pakistan

Barriers and Recommendations for Girls' Education



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1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Education Overview

Education System in Pakistan has always been a subject of great importance when it comes to the country's development and progress. The new government, elected in July 2018, stated in their manifesto that nearly 22.5 million Children are out of school. Girls are particularly affected. Thirty-two percent of primary school age girls are out of school in Pakistan, compared to 21 percent of boys. By grade six, 59 percent of girls are out of school, versus 49 percent of boys. Only 13 percent of girls are still in school by ninth grade. Both boys and girls are missing out on education in unacceptable numbers, but girls are worst affected. Among the poorest students, only 30 percent of boys finish primary school, and only 16 percent of girls. By secondary school, 18 percent of boys and 5 percent of girls.

There are high numbers of out-of-school children, and significant gender disparities in education, across the entire country, but some areas are much worse than others. As of 2014-2015, which is the most recent published data, the percentage of people who had ever attended school was:

- Baluchistan: 25 percent of women, 60 percent of men
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: 36 percent of women, 74 percent of men
- Sindh: 50 percent of women, 71 percent of men
- Punjab: 56 percent of women, 74 percent of men

Similar gender and regional disparities existed among those who completed primary school:

- Baluchistan: 19 percent of women, 48 percent of men
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: 28 percent of women, 59 percent of men
- Sindh: 43 percent of women; 62 percent of men
- Punjab: 47 percent of women; 61 percent of men

Pakistan's education system has changed significantly in recent years, responding to an abdication by the government of responsibility to provide, through government schools, an adequate standard of education, compulsory and free of charge, to all children. There has been an explosion of new private schools, largely unregulated, of wildly varying quality.

The number of private schools increased by 69 percent during the period from 1999-2000 to 2007-2008 alone, a period during which the number of government schools increased by 8 percent.

Pakistan's highly decentralized structure of government means that decisions regarding education policy are mostly made at the subnational level, consisting of four provinces (Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh), the capital area containing Islamabad, and the federally-administered tribal areas near the Afghanistan border, and the administrative entities of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Every province has a separate planning process, on a different timeline, with varying approaches and levels of effectiveness and commitment to improving access to education for girls.

2. PURPOSE

Article 25A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan provides the main policy framework for the universalization of education, asserting the fundamental right to free and compulsory education for children aged 5 to 16 years.

This Roadmap is addressed to educational authorities with recommendations.

The Purpose of this Roadmap is:

- 1- Provide an overview of current education system and identify strategic areas of redressal and review.
- 2- Garner political support and provide solutions to stakeholders for key gaps and issue in education sector of Pakistan.
- 3- Ensure that government should be guided by these four essential criteria for education: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability.
- 4- Create positive impact on school enrollment and ensure that goals of universal education are met.
- 5- Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education.
- 6- Build and upgrade educational facilities and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
- 7- Ensure that teachers are qualified and include yearly training sessions for teachers.

3. BARRIERS TO GIRLS EDUCATION WITHIN SCHOOL SYSTEM

3.1. Lack of investment – Shortage of Government schools

The government does not adequately invest in schools. One result is that there are not enough government schools for all children to have access to one. Government schools are in such short supply and far away that even in Pakistan's major cities many children cannot reach a school on foot safely and in a reasonable amount of time. The situation is far worse in rural areas, where schools are even scarcer, and it is less likely that private schools will fill the gap. Most children start school at the age 8-12 because parents wait for them to get old enough to walk to their school on their own. Families that can access a government school often find that it is overcrowded.

Secondary schools are in shorter supply than primary schools, and colleges are even scarcer, especially for girls. Schools are more likely to be gender segregated as children get older, and there are fewer schools for girls than for boys. Many girls are pushed out of continuing studies because they finish at one school and cannot access the next grade level. Pakistan has more boy's schools than girl's school, despite the greater safety concerns and restriction on freedom of movement many girls face.

3.2. High cost of education

Poor families struggle to meet the costs of sending their children to school. Government schools are generally more affordable than private education, but they sometime charge tuition, registration or exam fees etc. The many poor families who cannot access a government school are left with options outside the government school system. The range of expensive private schools and informal tuition centers creates complex confusion for parents and children to navigate. Children often switch between Government and Private Schools for financial reasons. Many girls experience several or all of these forms of study without gaining any educational qualifications. Madrasas and informal tuitions are used as alternatives to school by many students who cannot afford the cost of schools. They are not adequate substitute for schools. Children learn whatever teacher chooses to teach. They do not teach a full curriculum or help them obtain formal educational qualifications.

3.3. Poor quality of education

Through several researches it is observed that education system normally is so poor that families don't want to send their children to schools. In government schools, parents and students complained of teachers not showing



Figure 1: Girls studying in a backward school of Baluchistan

up, overcrowding, and poor facilities. At private schools, particularly low-cost private schools, concerns related to teachers being badly educated and unqualified. Teachers in both government and private schools pressure parents to pay for out-of-school tutoring, an additional expense. In both government and private schools, use of punishment and abusive behavior by teachers was widely reported.

3.4. No enforcement of compulsory education

One reason so many children in Pakistan do not go to school is that there is no enforced government expectation that children should study. Pakistan's constitution states, "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law." However, there is no organized effort by government in any province to ensure that all children study. When children are not sent to school, no government official reaches out to the family to encourage or require that the child study.

3.5. Corruption

Corruption is a major issue in the government school system and exists in several forms. One of the most pervasive is nepotism or bribery in the recruitment of teachers and principals. Some people simply purchase teaching positions and others obtain their jobs through political connections. There is also corruption within schools. Students who pay bribes are more likely to get good grades as compare to deserving poor students.

4. BARRIERS OUTSIDE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Aside from the barriers to education within the school system, girls also face barriers in their homes and in the community.

4.1. Poverty

For many parents, the most fundamental barrier to sending their children to school is poverty. Even relatively low associated costs can put education out of reach for poor families and there are many poor families in Pakistan. In 2016, the government determined that about 60 million Pakistanis, 6.8 to 7.6 million families were living in poverty, about 29.5 percent of the country's population.

Many children, including girls, are out of school because they are working. Sometimes they are engaged in paid work, which for girls often consists of home-based industries, such as sewing, embroidery, beading, or assembling items. Other children, almost always girls are kept home to do housework in the family home or are employed as domestic workers.

4.2. Social Norms

Some families do not believe that girls should be educated or believe girls should not study beyond a certain age. Attitudes regarding girls' education vary significantly across different communities. In some areas, families violating cultural norms prohibiting girls from studying can face pressure and hostility. Some girls are often removed from school as they approach puberty. Other families fear older girls will face sexual harassment at school and on the way there and back.



Figure 2: Girls following unwarranted norms while going to schools

Child marriage is both a consequence and a cause of girls not attending school. In Pakistan, 21 percent of girls marry before age 18, and 3 percent marry before age 15. Harmful gender norms create economic incentives to prioritize boys' education. Many families have this thought that daughters normally go to live with and contribute to, their husband's family, while sons are expected to remain with their parents, so sending sons to school is seen as a better investment in the family's economic future.

4.3. Insecurity

Many families and girls cited security as a barrier to girls studying. They described many types of insecurity, including sexual harassment, kidnapping, and crime.

Families worry about busy roads; the large distance many girls must travel to school increases risks and fears. Many girls experienced sexual harassment on the way to school and police demonstrate little willingness to help prevent harassment. Girls and families also fear kidnapping, another fear exacerbated by long journeys to school.

4.4. Armed conflicts and targeted attacks on Schools

Many parts of Pakistan face escalating levels of violence related to insurgency, and ethnic and religious conflict. This is having a devastating impact on girls' access to education, and ethnic conflict often spills into schools.

One of the features of conflict in Pakistan has been targeted attacks against students, teachers, and schools. The most devastating attack on education in recent years in Pakistan was the December 2014 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar city, where militants killed 145 people, almost all of them children. This attack was far from isolated, however.

Between 2013 and 2017, hundreds of schools were attacked, typically with explosive devices, killing several hundred students and teachers, and damaging and destroying infrastructure. One-third of these attacks specifically targeted girls and women, aiming to interrupt their studies.



Figure 3: Army Public School in Peshawar 2014

5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS (To Provincial Education Authorities)

5.1. Increase the Availability of Government Schools

- a. Rehabilitate, build, and establish new schools, especially for girls.
- b. Until government schools are universally available, develop a program for providing scholarships to good-quality private schools for girls living in areas not served by government schools.
- c. In consultation with school officials, students, communities, and relevant local government officials, provide free or affordable transport for students who would need to travel long distances or through difficult environments to get to a government school.
- d. Introduce a partial or fully subsidized transport program for students in urban areas to travel to government schools.

5.2. Increase Girl's Participation in Education

- a. Ensure universal access to free primary and secondary education, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 4, including by:
- b. Abolishing all tuition, registration and exam fees at government schools;
- c. Providing all needed school supplies to all students, including notebooks, pens, pencils, and a book bag;
- d. Abolishing uniform requirements, or providing uniforms at no cost to students;
- e. Reforming the system for providing textbooks, to ensure that every student receives free use of a full set of textbooks in a timely manner each school year.
- f. Instruct all principals to work with school staff to do outreach in the catchment area for each school, identifying out-of-school children and working with families to convince them to send their children to school.
- g. Develop and ensure compliance with guidelines that prohibit schools from excluding students based on their lack of identification or birth certificate.
- h. Require schools to permit children to enroll at any point in the school year.
- i. Ensure that every school has an active school management committee, and that the staff of the school are working with the committee to identify and reach out of school children in the community.
- j. Explore options for increasing attendance by girls from poor families through scholarships, food distribution or meal programs at girls' schools.
- k. Develop and implement a plan to increase access to alternative forms of education for children and adults who have been unable to study during their school-age years.

5.3. Improve Retention of Girls in School

- a. Adopt mechanisms to ensure all schools regularly monitor students who are out of school for prolonged periods of time or drop out of school altogether and reach out to determine the reasons for non-attendance and seek to re-engage the student in school.
- b. Take steps to help ensure cases of harassment and threats are reported to appropriate enforcement authorities, including police, and that cases are duly investigated and appropriately prosecuted.
- c. Require each school to develop a security plan in consultation with students and parents, with each plan for a mixed or girls' school giving special attention to security issues of concern to girls including sexual harassment.
- d. Develop guidelines for teachers and principals on monitoring the student body for girls at risk of child marriage. When girls are identified as being at risk, school staff should reach out to the family to discourage the marriage and to keep the girl in school.
- e. Develop a plan to expand access to middle and high school for girls through the government education system, including establishment of new schools and colleges and, where possible, adding additional grades to existing schools.

5.4. Improve the Quality of Education

- a. Strengthen the system for monitoring and quality assurance of all schools, not only for government schools but also private schools and madrasas.
- b. Hire and deploy more qualified teachers as needed.
- c. Ensure adequate qualification requirements are in place and applied for teachers, and provided domestically competitive salaries, and where necessary provide financial incentives to encourage teachers, especially female teachers, to work in under-served areas of the country.
- d. Publicly prohibit all school staff from using any form of corporal punishment and take appropriate disciplinary action against any employee violating this rule.
- e. Include mandatory training on alternative forms of class management and teacher discipline in all teacher trainings. Ensure teachers are adequately trained in positive forms of class management, and ensure teachers are provided with sufficient materials and tools to adequately manage large classrooms.
- f. Ensure that all newly constructed schools have adequate boundary walls, safe and private toilets with hygiene facilities, and access to safe drinking water. Work promptly to install boundary walls, toilets with hygiene facilities and a safe drinking water source in existing schools that do not have them, with the goal of all schools having these facilities.

5.5. Improve Transparency and Accountability.

- a.** Strengthen anti-corruption and anti- nepotism mechanism to ensure that anyone who encounters corruption or nepotism by government education officials has access to effective+ responsive complaints mechanism
- b.** Include in all job announcement and recruitment statements explaining that it is offensive for anyone to demand a bribe at any stage in the recruitment process for teachers and include information on how applicants can confidentially report any such demand.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Q#1: What is the ratio of government & private schools in your district?

سوال نمبر 1: آپ اور نجی سکولوں کا تناسب کیا ہے؟ کے ضلع میں سرکاری

Q#2: How many boys and girls currently studying in private and government schools in your district

سوال نمبر 2: اس وقت آپ کے ضلع کے نجی اور سرکاری سکولوں میں کتنے لڑکے اور لڑکیاں زیر تعلیم ہیں؟

Q#3: What are the problems girls face for education in your district (long distance, safety issues, family issues, and cultural issues if any other)?

سوال نمبر 3: لڑکیوں کو آپ کے ضلع میں تعلیم کے لیے کن پریشانیوں کا سامنا کرنا پڑتا ہے (سکول پہنچ سے دور ہیں، حفاظت کے مسائل، ثقافتی مسائل اور ان کے ساتھ اور کوئی دوسرے مسائل بھی ہیں تو بتائیں)؟

Q#4: What is the literacy rate in your district?

سوال نمبر 4: آپ کے ضلع میں خواندگی کی شرح کتنی ہے؟

Q#5: What is the ratio of middle, primary and higher schools in your district?

سوال نمبر 5: آپ کے ضلع میں مڈل، پرائمری، اور ہائی اسکول کا تناسب کیا ہے؟

Q#6: What are the issues of teacher's recruitment, development, and transfer in schools in your district?

سوال نمبر 6: آپ کے ضلع میں سکولوں میں اساتذہ کی بھرتی، ترقی اور ٹرانسفر کے مسائل کیا ہیں؟

Q#7: Do Government Schools have friendly, Clean, and approachable environment with all basic facilities? If no, then kindly write down basic problems

سوال نمبر 7: کیا حکومت سکولوں میں تمام بنیادی سہولیات کے ساتھ دوستانہ، صاف اور قابل رسائی ماحول فراہم کر رہی ہے؟ اگر نہیں تو برائے مہربانی بنیادی مسائل لکھیں۔

Q#8: What are your suggestions for better education system in your district?

سوال نمبر 8: بہتر نظام تعلیم کے لیے آپ کی کیا تجاویز ہیں؟