



Experts, legislators and civil society representatives engaged in a discussion on "Better financing for inclusive and equitable education during the COVID era"

Civil Society Spotlight Report on SDG 4 for HLPF 2021

COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES



Population:	225.2 million (Worldometers, 2021)
Population aged 14 years and younger:	34.8% of total population (WB, 2020a)
2021 Global Index Score:	57.72/100 (SDR 2021)
2021 Global Index Rank:	129/165 (SDR 2021)
SDG 4 Dashboard:	● Major challenges remain (SDR 2021)
SDG 4 Trend:	➔ Stagnating (SDR 2021)
SDG 10 Dashboard:	● Major challenges remain (SDR 2021)
2019 HDI Value/Rank:	0.557, 154 out of 189 (HDRO, 2020)
GNI per capita (PPP\$):	5,005 (HDRO, 2020)
Gini Index:	31.69 (Statista, 2020)
Income Group:	Lower-Middle Income Status (WB, 2020b)
Education Expenditure:	2.3% of the GDP (PAGE, 2020)
Out of School:	22.8 million children aged between 5-16 years Girls- 12,084,000 Boys- 10,716,000 (PCE Pakistan, 2020)

References:

- Human Development Report Office (HDRO). (2020). Latest Human Development Index Ranking. Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/latest-human-development-index-ranking>
- Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education (PAGE). (2020). Education Budget of Pakistan. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from <https://page.org.pk/education-budget-of-pakistan/>
- Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE). (2020). Bringing All the Girls to School: A Case for More Investment. Retrieved July 5, 2021, <https://pcepakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/bringing-all-the-girls-to-school.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2wuL7vqEMruxLTx3L42zbBmbjGa9FqPP91iqNZt-1020ob7oC7P1LFZ18>
- Sachs et al. (2021): The Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Report 2021. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Statista. (2020). GINI index worldwide 2020, by country. Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1171540/gini-index-by-country>
- Sustainable Development Report: Rankings. (2021). Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings>
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database. (2018). Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/id>
- World Bank. (2020a). Population ages 0-14 (% of total population) - Pakistan. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SPPOP0014.TQ.ZS?locations=PK>
- World Bank Country and Lending Groups. (2020b). Retrieved July 1, 2021, from <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>
- Worldometers. (2021). Pakistan Population. Retrieved July 4, 2021, from <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/pakistan-population/>

I. COUNTRY CONTEXT

In 2020, a new challenge in the shape of a global pandemic emerged in the world which has affected every country on the planet, whether it is a developed economy or a developing one. The COVID-19 pandemic derailed socio-economic growth and impeded the progress of countries aiming to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This health crisis, which was originally thought to be short-lived, has completely changed the course of modern lives and has had profound impacts on health, education, employment, livelihoods, the economy, and the climate.

In Pakistan, as of May 31, 2021, the number of recorded deaths that can be attributed to COVID-19 reached 20,850.¹ The lack of clean water in Pakistan also significantly adds to the health crisis. As a country that is already water stressed, an estimated 70 per cent of households still drink bacterial contaminated water.

According to the Federal Bureau of Statistics and the National Child Labour, approximately 19 million children below 14 years of age are working as child labourers in Pakistan. Additionally, more than 18 million Pakistanis have become jobless due to steps taken to contain the spread of COVID-19. According to World Bank forecasts, the global economy will shrink by 5.2 per cent this year amid the COVID-19 pandemic.²

The pandemic has had an impact on the environment as well. While there have been many gains in terms of clean air and rare species of animals resurfacing, the spread of COVID-19 has led to corporations using single-use plastic bags once again. Single-use masks are adding to land pollution as well.

The education sector has also faced a new set of challenges. A survey conducted by the Centre for Global Development found that girls' education is impacted more than boys' learning as the girls are more likely to assist with chores while boys spend time playing inside.³ Additionally, girls and women have especially been impacted by discrimination and violence. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2020 (GII), Pakistan now ranks 151st of 153 countries.⁴

The pandemic also affected the number of out-of-school children. Given that 22 million children are already out of school in Pakistan, it is estimated that an additional 930,000 children will drop out from both primary and secondary education which can be translated to an increase of 4.2 per cent.⁵ According to sources, this estimate is based on the increasing levels of poverty. Poverty on top of the increasing cost of private education lead families to push their children into paid labour or early marriage.

II. EQUITY AND FINANCING CONCERNS IN SDG 4 AMIDST COVID-19

To ensure that the targets of SDG 4 are met, the government must make collective efforts to address financing and equity concerns. To achieve this, the government does not have to

- <https://covid.gov.pk/stats/pakistan>
- SDGs Watch - Parliamentary Pursuit for Human Development, pg:22
- <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/covid-19-pakistan-phone-survey-assess-education-economic-and-health-related-outcomes.pdf>
- United Nations Pakistan - Annual Report 2020, pg: 5
- Learning Losses in Pakistan due to COVID-19 School Closures: The World Bank

take on this role in silos, but they must engage civil society organisations (CSOs) and development partners. The CSOs come with a breadth of experience that can be used to ensure learning continuity, especially for the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups, such as girls and women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and children, among many others.

According to the SDG Index Score, Pakistan ranks 129 out of 165 countries and many of its Goal 4 targets remain unachieved. There are major challenges remaining and progress remains stagnant. According to a working paper by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Pakistan's progress on the SDGs can be attributed to a low level of spending. Public expenditure on education was at 2.3 per cent of the GDP in the fiscal year 2019-20 and many gaps were observed between the allocated budget and the allocated spending.⁶ While the investment remains low, the education sector will inevitably be marred by other issues such as bad governance, security threats, and the unavailability of basic facilities in schools.

The government's limited enforcement of policy commitments and challenges in equitable implementation also impede access to quality education, especially for disadvantaged groups, such as girls and children with disabilities. To meet the SDG targets in Pakistan, education spending would need to increase significantly. According to the IMF, annual total education spending would need to increase by about 5.7 per cent of the GDP (from 3.9 per cent in 2018 to 9.6 per cent in 2030) to meet the SDG targets.⁷ The higher allocation of budget would be attributed to increasing teacher salaries, recruiting more teachers, and reducing class sizes, among other expenses.

It is also estimated that Pakistan would have to enrol 50 per cent students in pre-primary education, 100 per cent in primary and secondary education, and 50 per cent in tertiary education to meet the SDG targets.⁸

Learning outcomes have been affected by the global pandemic as well. With online learning not available to students living in remote areas, many students fell behind. Even if remote learning was available to students, the learning of students was still affected as parents found it hard to keep children engaged with the distractions in the household, and learning devices had to be shared with siblings. Parents also found it difficult to use the technology themselves, sometimes struggling with the mode of instruction. Online learning with the use of technology was particularly challenging for girls as they are much less likely to have access to any form of technology, especially in rural areas.⁹

During the early stages of the pandemic, the government acted promptly at both the federal and provincial levels as they started airing content for K-12 via television channels. This strategy proved effective as televisions are much more widely owned compared to radios. However, this measure did not benefit children equally as there is an income disparity that does not allow equitable access to education. In Punjab, children in the poorest households (only 17 per cent have televisions in their homes) are much less likely to be able to benefit from this policy initiative than children in the richest households (95 per cent of whom have access to television).¹⁰ The numbers for Sindh are similar: 96 per cent of households in the top quartile have televisions, while only 20 per cent in the bottom quartile have televisions.

III. EMBEDDING SDG 4 IN OTHER SDGS

In many countries, the pandemic and its effects are exacerbated due to the non-availability of clean water and sanitation, weak economic growth and the absence of decent work, pervasive inequalities, and above all, entrenched poverty and food insecurity.

The implementation of the SDGs will improve the quality of life for many people. If children are healthy and nourished, their performance will likely enhance in schools. Similarly, if parents are employed and can

provide for their families, they are less likely to take their children out of schools in favour of employment or early marriages.

The government, CSOs, and development partners have taken concrete steps in all facets of the SDGs to ensure improvement in the quality of lives in the midst of the pandemic.

With education becoming remote with online schooling, a large number of students have the possibility of being exposed to unsafe situations online. The government held a consultation for online child safety and discussed the risks of this exposure. They also held multi-stakeholder consultations to address SDG 8 where the participants discussed a legislative review of the existing laws, bills, and amendments related to this Goal. Additionally, the government also held a Virtual Meeting of the Sub-Group on SDGs Scorecards Development. This meeting aimed at developing SDGs Score Cards to serve as a tool to monitor the overall developmental framework of Pakistan.

SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)

To address the emerging health crisis in light of COVID-19, the UN mobilised a team in support of Pakistan's health system in 2020 by providing 130,000 frontline health workers with protective personal equipment (PPE), while training 83,744 on COVID-19 and 142,978 on infection prevention and control (IPC) using specially developed training manuals.¹¹ The Development Partners' Group also assisted the government to coordinate health sector partners and plan for the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines under the COVAX initiative in 2021 to make the vaccines more accessible.¹²

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

The pandemic and subsequent quarantine affected the poorest, most marginalised groups in Pakistan. The government swiftly responded to this with the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) as they distributed cash assistance – worth PKR 131 million in total or USD 831,344¹³ – to 88,664 vulnerable households.¹⁴ The UN assisted this initiative and addressed food deficits in the districts of Sindh and Balochistan hardest hit by drought-like conditions and the repercussions of the pandemic. It provided beneficiaries with a humanitarian top-up of PKR 4,000 (USD 25) each. This multi-donor funded project also reached out to 74,442 vulnerable Afghan refugee families which were gravely affected, as they could not continue their informal jobs anymore.¹⁵

The government of Pakistan announced a complete lockdown from March-June 2020 to contain the spread of the virus. This affected the economic growth and disproportionately impacted a large number of women. The government has launched a fiscal stimulus package worth PKR 1.2 trillion or USD 7.615 billion¹⁶ that involved expanding the Ehsaas emergency programme's outreach from 5.2 million to 12 million households.¹⁷ Initiated in April 2020, the Ehsaas emergency is a government programme that provides financial assistance to more than 15 million families. Each family is provided with PKR 12,000 (76 USD) per family, and the program has a total budget of PKR 203 billion (USD 1.28 billion).¹⁸

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)

Throughout 2020, Pakistan's Federal and Provincial Governments worked with the UN initiative to make governance more accountable, transparent, inclusive, and responsive. The UN collaborated with youth through their Adolescent and Youth Engagement Initiative. Under this measure, young people contributed to the Government's COVID-19

11 United Nations Pakistan - Annual Report 2020, pg: 10

12 Ibid, pg: 10

13 The currency converter used for the PKR figures in this document was XE Pakistani Rupee to US Dollar conversion, Retrieved Jul 4, 2021, 02:36 UTC, from <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=131000000&From=PKR&To=USD>

14 Ibid, pg: 18

15 Ibid, pg: 18

16 XE Pakistani Rupee to US Dollar conversion, Retrieved Jul 4, 2021, 02:38 UTC, from <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=131000000&From=PKR&To=USD>

17 Ibid, pg: 5

18 From <https://www.pass.gov.pk/Detail/f90ce1f7-083a-4d85-b3e8-60f75ba0d788>

6 <https://page.org.pk/education-budget-of-pakistan/>

7 Pakistan: Spending Needs for Reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - International Monetary Fund, 7

8 Ibid, pg: 8.

9 Learning Losses in Pakistan due to COVID-19 School Closures: The World Bank

10 Ibid.

response through the Youth Innovation Challenge. This initiative mentored 209 young leaders and a digital campaign that reached 4.5 million people, ultimately spreading awareness regarding the pandemic and sharing preventative measures.¹⁹

IV. ROLE OF EDUCATION IN SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT RECOVERY

Since 2015, Pakistan has committed to implementing the SDGs in Pakistan, localised the Goals, and incorporated these into their national development agenda. To implement the SDGs, align them with local goals, and effectively ensure their roll-out, the Parliamentary SDGs Secretariat was formed.

The government has taken several steps to assist with COVID-19 with the help of some development partners. The UN assisted the government in developing age appropriate, gender-sensitive National Guidelines on Life Skills-Based Education (LSBE). This included content on child protection in the curriculum for Grades 1–5 under the Prime Minister's Single National Curriculum initiative.²⁰ Additionally, the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission held webinars and resolved to adopt a hybrid approach for technical and vocational education and training (TVET), combining digital and face-to-face solutions to mitigate COVID-19's impact. These initiatives aim to create job opportunities to help students and families who have lost their income due to the pandemic.

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has initiated recovery plans to counter the fallbacks from the pandemic and has developed the Pakistan National Education Response and Resilience Plan (K-12) for COVID-19. This recovery plan has three priority areas which include the continuation of learning, system strengthening and resilience and addressing health (physical and psychosocial), hygiene, and safety. The plan also aims to offer school children a wide range of distance learning channels and aims to distribute learning materials to students living in remote areas who have been affected by the pandemic. This focuses on vulnerable populations, especially girls who are dropping out of school as a result of socio-economic strains. It plans to train teachers in distant learning strategies and learning assessments to effectively support children's education. Furthermore, opening schools will be provided with basic sanitisation and hygiene supplies to ensure they meet safety standards.

The government has also initiated the Har Ghar School programme, which is an innovative solution for parents who can teach their children from the comfort of their home.²¹ The Har Ghar School programme uses multiple mediums and aids to help parents assist children's and young people's learning at home. These tools are based on different approaches and include a wide range of activities, such as wooden and pattern blocks, board games, and learning charts. Communities can participate in this initiative by providing the parents with low-cost kits so that children have a wide range of resources to work that is linked to their syllabus. Additionally, learning resources related to their curriculum could be uploaded on digital mediums, such as YouTube, WhatsApp and Zoom applications.²² Through this initiative, families and children can be briefed on preventive measures to keep themselves safe from COVID-19 and learn how to stay safe.

The provincial governments also took contingency measures to flatten the curve and curb the surge in the rising number of COVID-19 cases. Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Balochistan, and Sindh announced the closure of schools, emphasising on remote learning. In KP, 5 million school-going children were affected.²³ Although some of the schools initiated online learning, only a small percentage of students had access to the internet. With the help of UNICEF, schools were closed and children were given a study plan to assist with their learning.²⁴ Severe

19 Ibid, pg: 17

20 Ibid, pg: 15

21 SDGs Watch - Parliamentary Pursuit for Human Development, 9

22 SDGs Watch. Newsletter March - August 2020. Parliamentary Pursuit for Human Development, 9

23 <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/stories/education-cannot-wait>

24 Ibid



restrictions were also imposed on educational institutions in Sindh.²⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a space for the CSOs to step in and assist with relief efforts as the government has limited resources to fully cope with the challenges that the pandemic has presented. While many CSOs are providing medical supplies to meet the shortcomings of the government, CSOs working on education are assisting and contributing significantly as well. For instance, some organisations are expanding their digital learning platforms to assist girls from low-income households to continue their learning from home. Other initiatives include providing teaching aids to instructors so that they can adapt and enhance their lessons based on the learning of the students, and consequently develop a programme to help the students catch up.

Efforts made by the CSOs also include psychosocial counselling for the most marginalised, including adolescent girls, and will focus on providing them with the necessary health, safety, and hygiene information, as well as the technological resources to ensure the protection and safety of students. The federal and provincial governments are also making efforts to curb the effects of COVID-19 by partnering with CSOs, engaging the community in their relief efforts. Together, they are running community awareness programmes on COVID-19, spreading awareness regarding infection prevention and control, and supporting the measures such as social distancing through the Clean Green Champions and religious leaders among other stakeholders. They are also distributing hygiene items, especially soap and sanitisers to poor population groups.

In light of all of these measures, the role of education and its ability to transform lives cannot be ignored. Children, youth, and adults alike need education to develop critical thinking skills, learn about the world, and participate in the global economy. The essence of education is the transformation of self and environment, which has the power to break out of their existing lives, learn new skills, and improve their lives for the better.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed many challenges but in many ways, it has shown alternate ways of approaching one's life. It has affected the continuity of learning, and disrupted the progress that was made on education. Due to the new ways of functioning on a daily basis, new mechanisms have been set-up that require facilitation from the government especially to ensure that every child, youth, and adult has access to quality education and no one is left behind. More than ever, the government, civil society, and other development partners need to come together, create synergies, and have viable solutions to advance in education and towards a better future. The following recommendations are proposed:

◆ Increase engagement with civil society organisations

- The government should make policy-making an inclusive process that engages partners and stakeholders, such as CSOs and teachers' associations, across the board to ensure their voices are heard and incorporated into the policy making process.

25 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1620485>

- The implementation of policies should be conducted in a transparent way, making the proceedings open to the public.
- Policy discussions, planning and monitoring should include representation of relevant stakeholders in which the views of the community members can be shared through the engagement of CSOs.
- ◆ Improve remote learning and access to quality education in Pakistan
 - Improve access to remote learning by expanding connectivity and device ownership, and by ensuring families know when the programming is available.
 - Improve the quality of remote learning by further developing the content and its sequencing, and by making the content more interactive.
 - Equip the management staff and hire qualified teachers with the specialised knowledge and resources to ensure strict compliance of standard operating procedures (SOPs) in all educational institutions.
 - Strengthen curricula and support teachers to facilitate rapid catch-up with learning losses by introducing new methods of pre-service and in-service trainings to upgrade teachers' capacity, especially with respect to digital teaching pedagogies.
 - Ensure access to digital/online education for all students, especially the marginalised groups.
 - Update textbooks and curriculum according to new advancements in science and technology and inculcate life skills and vocational skills among pupils.
 - Create distance learning platforms to explore ways in which these platforms can embed a two-way communication process, allowing students to ask questions, request clarity, and share their comments.
 - Create a blended learning solution that will combine online educational materials and opportunities for interaction with traditional classroom methods.
 - Prioritise the education of girls and learners with disabilities by creating learning solutions and alternate avenues integrated into Pakistan's education disaster preparedness plans to ensure that no one is truly left behind.
- ◆ Meet the political promises and international commitments by increasing the budget allocation for education to a minimum 4-6 per cent of the GDP and/or 15-20 per cent of the total public expenditure
 - Provide personal protective equipment in every school to deter students from dropping out of schools.
 - Ensure equitable resource allocation for inclusive and equitable education.
 - Improve systems for the efficient and effective utilisation of the development budget at all levels by developing a planning and implementation framework at the local level that includes local governments, education managers, and School Management Committee.
 - Rationalise the budget according to the specific needs of each individual school, with a special focus on schools in far-flung areas and the ones lagging behind in gender parity and inclusivity.
- Per child cost must be calculated and budget should be allocated accordingly with an emphasis on gender budgeting, taking account of facilities required by adolescent girls.
- Increase both the development and non-salaried budget significantly to ensure more middle and high schools with better infrastructure and facilities.
- Prioritise allocation towards public education, specifically for marginalised groups, in the tax reforms.
- ◆ Improve Girls' and Women's Access to Education
 - Build the capacity of institutions on developing accurate data management systems to monitor girls' and women's enrolment and attendance.
 - Prioritise girls' and women's education, including primary, secondary, and higher education, in the education budget.
 - Implement effective measures to raise more taxes for the wealthy and eliminate corporate tax evasion to raise domestic resources for increased funding for education, particularly to deliver free and equitable education to all, especially the marginalised.
 - Build and upgrade more schools, from primary to secondary, and ensure the provision of transport to improve girls' access to secondary and high schools.
 - Formulate gender-transformative policies and plans to ensure access and completion of secondary education for all girls and women.
 - Engage district authorities, local governments, and communities on budget matters for increased accountability, transparency, and openness.
 - Increase spending on improving basic facilities within schools and ensuring that school campuses are inclusive to the unique needs of the girls and women.
 - Develop education programmes that allow a greater understanding of the role of adult literacy and soft skills development in sustaining development initiatives and facilitating gender equality for those affected by the pandemic.
 - Promote participatory research approaches at national and district levels to ensure that the voices of rural women and girls can begin to influence literacy policy discourse.
 - Develop long-term plans to address supply-side issues such as safety from COVID-19, school construction, hiring of teachers (especially female) and increasing the availability of gender-transformative teaching and learning materials.
- ◆ Mental Well-being of Children, Youth, and Adults during Emergencies
 - Provide mental health support in schools by training teachers in both public and private schools to identify mental health issues among children. This will not only assist learning but also create great empathy to help the impacted all learners recognise their own underlying emotions and identify the causes for feeling those emotions. •



Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals working towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, lifelong adult education and learning.

Unit 106 Sterten Place Condominium, 116 Maginhawa Street,
Teachers Village East, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
Tel/Fax: 63 2 8441 4594
Email: aspbae@gmail.com | Website: www.aspbae.org

ISBN: 978-621-95859-0-3



**PAKISTAN
COALITION FOR
PCE EDUCATION**

Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE Pakistan)
Office 007 Ground Floor Executive Suites F11,
Islamabad, Pakistan
Tel: +92-51 2112460-2 Fax: +92-51 2112459
Email: info@pcepak.org
Website: <https://pcepak.org/>

Established in 2005, Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) registered as Society for Access to Quality Education with the aim of working towards ensuring free quality education for all, irrespective of gender, religion and class differences, that promotes peace, tolerance, democracy and justice and safeguards diversity. While it focused primarily on the financing of education, PCE is now taking on several issues including the implementation of the right to education, education governance, girls' education, public-private partnerships in education and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Over the course of several years, PCE established strong linkages with key stakeholders and has been working to make coordinated efforts in highlighting the prevalent issues in education. PCE is a member organisation of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE).