

Pakistan



■ A leadership training for young girls in Islamabad

Executive Summary

Civil Society Spotlight Report on the SDG 4 Implementation Status in Pakistan

COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES



TOTAL POPULATION:	197.016 million (UNESCO, 2017)
POPULATION AGED 14 YEARS AND YOUNGER:	68.519 million (24.78%) (UNESCO, 2017)
GNI PER CAPITA:	US\$ 1,580 (World Bank, 2017)
INCOME GROUP:	Lower Middle Income Status (World Bank, 2018)
HDI VALUE AND RANK:	0.562, 150 out of 189 (UNDP, 2017)
POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATIO AT NATIONAL POVERTY LINES (% OF POPULATION):	24.3% (World Bank, 2015)
OUT OF SCHOOL RATE:	40.8% (UNESCO, 2019)
OUT OF SCHOOL:	5,324,181 children 3,204,934 female and 2,119,247 male (UNESCO, 2017) 5,586,343 adolescents 2,938,390 female and 2,647,953 male (UNESCO, 2017)
LITERACY RATE (15-24 YEARS):	72.8%: Female 65.55%: Male 79.77% (UNESCO, 2014)
LITERACY RATE (15 YEARS AND OLDER):	56.98% Female 44.28%: Male 69.07% (UNESCO, 2014)
EDUCATION EXPENDITURE:	2.83% of the GDP 13.85% of the total government expenditure (UNESCO, 2017)

This report summarises the progress and key education challenges in Pakistan, especially in light of Sustainable Development Goal 4, and what the government has done to address them. It notes that much of Pakistan's problems revolve around issues of financing, equity, and quality of education. It also reflects other major issues like critical thinking, teachers' training, and citizen's participation that resonates with the demands of the SDGs. Similarly, given that Pakistan is an unequal country, various socio-economic groups have different metrics of educational attainment. Girls, for instance, fare worse than their counterparts due to existing inequalities. While the government has committed to aligning its policies with the SDGs, and some institutional mechanisms have been rolled out, progress on the proper collection, monitoring, and documentation of data in the country is lagging. The government's reluctance to engage the civil society has further occluded them from the problems on the ground.

Pakistan is a country of 200 million people. With a federal setup, the country has four (4) provinces and two (2) special administrative units, in which distinct ethnic groups are in majority. It is also a country where inequalities in terms of both geographical and economic distribution persist, with the largest province more developed than smaller ones. Over the course of the years, several laws have been passed to reduce gender-related abuse and discrimination. However, they have not been fully implemented by the government.

As of 2017 to 2018, the allocated fund for education was around 2.83 per cent of the GDP, far from the target of 4 per cent. Despite various commitments made to education by the government, they have yet to be realised. Pakistan cannot achieve complete literacy, largely because not all children are enrolled as students.

Apart from the insufficient budget, girls' education remains to be one of the most neglected areas in the education sector in Pakistan. Societal restrictions and the limited access to or availability of safe schools with basic facilities are some of the main challenges that



■ Forum on Inclusive Education held in Islamabad in October 2018

impede girls from obtaining inclusive and equitable quality education. There are not enough schools for girls at any level, which directly affects their life choices and leaves little room to change their position in society.

Another key issue is the increasing number of private schools. The trends in privatisation aim to cater to the demands, and the government has adopted different modalities too. Hence, there is no specific standardisation of such schools, nor are they properly regulated. Where there is not much focus on the quality of education, the students' learning outcomes and access to opportunities are compromised.

The Government Rollout Plan

Policy Principles

The country's parliament has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a national development agenda. The national development will have to be in alignment with the SDGs. Several pillars of the country's Vision 2025 already correspond with the SDGs. Outlining the country's developmental goals in a decade, Vision 2025 was developed after several consultations at the federal and provincial levels.

Similarly, the National Education Policy (NEP) drafted in 2017 covers some of the SDG 4 indicators and the process indicators.

Institutional Arrangements

After the devolution of power in 2010, federal and provincial ministries are responsible for devising strategies, policies, and plans related to education at the central and provincial

levels to realise and implement the RTE, SDGs, and Vision 2025. The National Economic Council, a central economic decision-making body, has approved the "National Framework of SDGs in February 2016." At the same time, it has authorised the Planning Commission at the central level to ensure the achievement of the SDGs. At the provinces, this task is assigned to the provincial departments.

A dedicated SDGs Section has been formed at the federal level in the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform (MoPDR) to monitor and to coordinate as a national coordinating entity. To improvise the policy process and to provide inputs for a faster and more incisive policy implementation process, the MoPDR and the Provincial Planning and Development Departments partnered with UNDP under a five-year project to establish SDG Support Units at federal and provincial levels for the early institutionalisation of Agenda 2030.

Civil Society Organisation Engagement

Civil society in Pakistan, although historically vibrant, finds itself excluded from processes related to the SDGs. It should be noted that despite the adoption of the SDGs as a national agenda that involves different state and non-state actors, civil society organisations (CSOs) are rarely invited to participate during the infrequent discussions and meetings of the parliament's various committees. This limits their space for engagement as well as their contributions to the development agenda.

CSOs often liaise with the local government, the actual stakeholder of the SDGs on the ground level. However, local governments are not a permanent feature in Pakistan's politics; they have existed sporadically as they are often installed with the intent of reducing the power of the parties at the provincial level, and of serving as the direct link between local and central authorities. These governments, post-devolution, lack power as well. It also affects citizen's engagement, which relies on provincial or central authorities more than local ones. Citizens mostly look after parties in power at the central or provincial levels.

Since 2013, civil society space in Pakistan has been shrinking, mostly in areas affected by conflict, or on the grounds of security. Legal and administrative restrictions are placed on CSOs. They have been asked to register and re-register, audit their bank accounts – which they already do, share their details, apply for a No Objection Certification (NOC) while

Earlier in 2010, the Pakistani Parliament made the Right to Education (RTE) a fundamental right of the citizens through the insertion of article 25 A under the 18th amendment of the Constitution. This mandates the state to provide free and compulsory education to children between 5 to 16 years old.

working in the field, and even brief or report authorities about the purpose of activities. Those adopting a rights-based approach have been asked to revise their approach. In response to this order, some have shut down their activities while others have moulded them by including tangible outputs. Some leading rights activists, often associated with NGOs, have complained of being chased, banned, or harassed.

According to recently published 'State of Human Rights in 2018,' the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) cancelled the registration of 3,000 NGOs and non-profit organisations (NPOs) during 2017 to 2018 on the pretext that their accounts were suspected of being misused for money laundering. This was done in order to comply with the 40 recommendations set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to curb the terror financing and money laundering in the country. Towards the end of 2017, over 30 INGOs and NGOs were asked to wind up their operations and leave the country. The crackdown only intensified in 2018 when 18 international NGOs were ordered to do the same thing by 30 November 2018. In October 2018, envoys of the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, Norway, and Switzerland, as well as the ambassador of the European Union, wrote to the Ministry of Interior and the Prime Minister, expressing concern over the crackdown against INGOs. Unfortunately, the orders were not rescinded.

Key Strengths and Challenges

It is questionable if the SDGs have really trickled down in all committed policy spheres. The Planning Commission has been disseminating related material about the goals through various platforms and media, including IEC materials such as posters and pamphlets. While the Planning Commission is a central body, education governance is mainly a provincial subject. This means that different provinces have SDGs task forces with varying capacities.

In addition, there are hierarchy issues. For example, the Planning Commission comes directly under the Minister who is usually a top ranking office holder. This is not the case with the departments in provinces, which has to coordinate with the centre. The federal government has questioned the current mechanism of the implementation of SDGs by provincial governments. There is no national, accumulative purview of education. Each province draws its own estimate, having its own metrics and spending parameters. National-level synchronisation is also missing.

Another issue that persists is the limited capacity of the provinces. Since 2010, education is a provincial concern, all governments are required to build the capacity to establish departments and build human resources and well-drafted and synchronised sector plans with the efficient allocation of equitable resources, and appointment of well-trained teachers. It is crucial to have all of these backed by credible data, monitoring strategies, and linkages of relevant stakeholders at all levels from the bottom to the top. Only then will the capacities and strategies lead to good governance, transparency, and accountability of all service providers from schools and other ministries and departments. There is also no available data, and even if there is data, there is a strong mismatch between the district and provincial data as well as the national synchronised data. Failure to collect accurate and reliable data will lead to gaps in the statistics and to poorly-targeted policies and programmes.

Many of Pakistan's education policies centre on quantity, in particular eliminating out-of-school children. One of every five children of primary school going age is not in school. This issue is compounded at higher tiers of education. Enrolment also drops for marginalised groups, especially girls. Thus, a girl located in a far-flung area is less likely to be enrolled than a boy in the provincial capital. Similarly, access to education is among a number of key concerns for girls and other marginalised groups. Recently, schools





in conflict-affected or disaster-hit areas were completely destroyed. Building infrastructure has been perceived as a matter of priority more than the elimination of existing socio-economic inequalities.

Concluding Statement

The Government of Pakistan should:

- Ensure inclusive access to education for all, especially girls, persons living with disabilities, and students in conflict-affected areas, by analysing the data on the out-of-school for different socio-economic groups;
- Address data gaps by undertaking a proper review of which data metrics are accepted globally, and which exists in Pakistan, and then standardise data metrics and indicators at the central, provincial, and local (district) levels of administrations;
- Address financial gaps by investing in the secondary schooling system, delegating education initiatives to provinces, and increasing development spending in education through significant increases in the revenue and the widening of the tax base, as well as the

elimination of tax avoidance and harmful tax incentives accorded to the business sector;

- Ensure quality by introducing teachers' training programme at all levels of education, and, if possible, by launching teachers' training academies and initiatives;
- Increase girls' access to education by investing in infrastructure and ensuring free transport services for the safety of students, especially girls in inhospitable or distant terrains;
- Address governance issues by providing ample space for CSOs to engage at different levels and by encouraging NGOs and citizen forums to play their effective role in governance matters;
- Address challenges of privatisation by strengthening public education and regulating private sector in education, consistent with international human rights law and with the recent resolutions of the UN Human Rights Council which call for the appropriate regulatory framework for education providers while addressing the negative impacts of the commercialisation of education. •



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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 ASPBAE.



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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.

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