



Youth dialogue organized in QAU by PCE's Youth Leader

## 2024 CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT REPORT ON SDG 4

### I. COUNTRY CONTEXT

Pakistan, the fifth<sup>1</sup> most populous country in the world, had a population of 241.49 million in 2023 with a growth rate of 2.55%. This reflects a significant increase of 33.82 million people since 2017.<sup>2</sup> Pakistan has committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by integrating them into the national agenda despite facing several socio-economic challenges such as poverty, political unrest, government instability, natural disasters, and climate change. According to the SDG Report 2023, Pakistan's overall score is 59.0, ranking it 128th out of 166 countries.<sup>3</sup> Its performance remains below average in key sectors including education, healthcare, water, and sanitation.

Pakistan ranks 164th out of 193 countries with a score of 0.54 on the Human Development Index (HDI).<sup>4</sup> Although COVID-19 was managed well in terms of deaths, it initiated a snowball effect due to economic challenges and stagflation followed by political changes. Pakistan's ranking on the Global Hunger Index improved from 125th to 102 ranks out of 125 countries.<sup>5</sup> Pakistan faces a high prevalence of acute food insecurity. According to a recent World Food Programme Report, 43% of Pakistan's population faced food insecurity in 2022<sup>6</sup> and the challenge is exacerbated by worsening economic, political and environmental crises.

Pakistan has been actively working towards SDG 13 on Climate Action. The federal government has undertaken several measures, such as promoting renewable energy, greening policies, and phasing out single-use plastics. The Ministry of Climate Change was established in 2012 to lead national efforts in policy coordination and implementation, aiming for climate-resilient development. Key initiatives include the Climate Finance Unit, which secures global climate finance and

promotes awareness, and the Global Change Impact Studies Centre, which conducts crucial research on climate impacts and supports policy-making. Pakistan's ratification of international agreements like the Paris Agreement underscores its commitment to global climate goals. The Prime Minister's Committee on Climate Change, established in 2018, provides strategic guidance and ensures the effective implementation of the National Climate Change Policy, reflecting Pakistan's integrated approach to addressing climate challenges and achieving SDG 13.<sup>7</sup>

Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change has increased from 8th to 5th globally in recent years.<sup>8</sup> Climate change in Pakistan is evident in the rapid glacial melting, more intense heat waves, recurrent flash floods, declining agricultural yields, and exacerbating water scarcity. Among other climate change implications is increasing water stress with Pakistan's per capita water availability decreasing from 5,600 cubic meters in 1947 to an alarming 1,000 cubic meters in 2024<sup>9</sup> due to a multi-fold increase in population and widespread urbanisation increasing the per capita consumption, high wastage and low water recycling capacity. Only 36% of the population of Pakistan has access to secure,<sup>10</sup> clean water, with high bacteriological contamination decreasing access to safe drinking water.<sup>11</sup>

### II. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDGS/ SDG 4

Pakistan is the first country to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals. However, even before this, education has been prioritised by institutionalising the provision of free and compulsory education for every child (between the age of 5-16 years) as a fundamental constitutional

COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES	
Population:	241.49 million (2023)
GNI per Capita (PPP\$)	6,110 (2023)
Income Group	Lower-Middle Income
HDI: Value/Rank	0.540/ 164th out of 193 (2022)
Gini Index	29.6 (2018)
Education Expenditure (% GDP)	1.69% (2021)
Literacy Rate (15-64 Yrs.)	58.0 (2019)
Female / Male	46.5 / 69.3
2024 SDG Score/ Rank	57.02 / 137th out of 166
SDG 4 Trend	■ Major challenges remain ↓ Decreasing
SDG 4 Dashboard	
Climate-related disasters:	
Total No. of disasters*	16 (2020-22)
Regional Mean/ Median	9.3 / 4
Risk Management Index:	
Climate-driven Hazard & Exposure	6.4 (2022) Regional Mean: 4.6
Lack of coping capacity	5.4 (2022) Regional Mean: 4.3
Vulnerability	5.8 (2022) Regional Mean: 3.4
*Drought, Extreme temperature, Flood, Landslide, Storm, Wildfire	

<sup>1</sup> Worldmeter; retrieved June, 2024

<sup>2</sup> Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023), Press Release

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Development Report 2023

<sup>4</sup> UNDP's 2023-2024 Human Development Report

<sup>5</sup> Global Hunger Index 2023

<sup>6</sup> Food Insecurity in Pakistan

<sup>7</sup> Climate Change Communication and Education

<sup>8</sup> UN-Habitat Pakistan Country Report 2023

<sup>9</sup> The Vulnerability of Pakistan's Water Sector to the Impact of Climate Change: Identification of Gaps and Recommendations for Actions

<sup>10</sup> GlobalWaters.Org Pakistan

<sup>11</sup> Drinking Water Quality in Pakistan Current status and Challenges (PCRWR) 2021

right guaranteed under Article 25-A. Various policies have been enacted over the years to promote education and make substantial progress towards SDG-4 including Pakistan 2025: One Nation-One Vision, Draft National Education Policy (2017-2025), SDGs National Framework (2018). The federal and all provincial governments have enacted the Right to Education Acts, however, implementation of these Acts remains weak in most provinces, especially Balochistan. This is evident from the fact that the country's OOSC numbers have increased from 22.8million to 26.2 million in 2021-22 as reported in "Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22" by the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE).<sup>12</sup> The population of this age group (5-16 years) has increased and shows the inefficiency of the government in ensuring universal access to education.

Retention in educational institutions especially when transitioning to higher levels (such as middle to secondary and secondary to higher secondary) becomes an even bigger challenge. The leading causes of higher drop-outs include exacerbating poverty causing families to deprive children of education in favour of child labour to increase family income, and reduction in the number of public education institutions which increases travel distance to schools. The disparity becomes more pronounced among urban to rural areas and among genders. While the provision of technical education has garnered more traction in the past years, the number of public institutions remains insufficient with only 4,182 technical & vocational institutes across the country.<sup>13</sup>

Pakistan's population faces a plethora of challenges due to climate change. Children remain at the highest risk and Pakistan ranks 14th out of 163 countries on UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index in 2021.<sup>14</sup> Both federal and provincial governments have undertaken various measures to reinforce education standards such as establishing new schools, upgrading existing schools, ensuring basic educational facilities, promoting digital education, enhancing resilient education, promoting distance learning to increase access, and strengthening teacher capacity building to raise education standards of Pakistan to make sustainable progress towards the SDGs.

Since 2023, Pakistan has the world's highest out-of-school children (OOSC) population.<sup>15</sup> The Prime Minister of Pakistan declared a four-year education emergency across the country to enrol 26.2 million out-of-school children.<sup>16</sup> Between 2018-19 and 2020-21, Pakistan experienced a marginal increase in its literacy rate, from 62.4% to 62.8% higher in males (73.4%) than females (51.9%).<sup>17</sup>

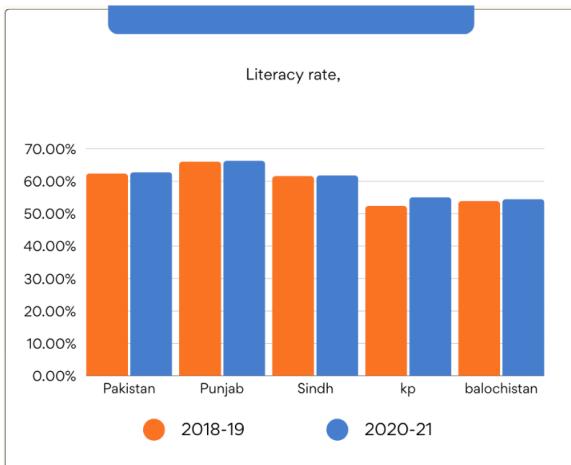


Figure 1. Comparison of % changes in literacy rates in 2018-19 & 2020-21

12 PAKISTAN EDUCATION STATISTICS 2021-22

13 Ibid.

14 THE HEAT IS ON! TOWARDS A CLIMATE RESILIENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN

15 PAKISTAN HAS MOST OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE WORLD, GEO-TV, 2023

## 1. CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION (CCE) IN PAKISTAN

Education is crucial for building resilience against climate change. Recognising this, the Federal Ministry of Climate Change has announced the formal introduction of climate change education (CCE) in its curriculum. However, this initiative is currently limited to schools in Islamabad as climate change is a devolved subject post-18th constitutional amendment.<sup>18</sup> Clean and Green Clubs have been set up at nearly 400 schools in Islamabad to promote environmental awareness and action among students.<sup>19</sup>

Distribution of Climate-related themes in Pakistan's National Curriculum Framework and Education Sector Plans

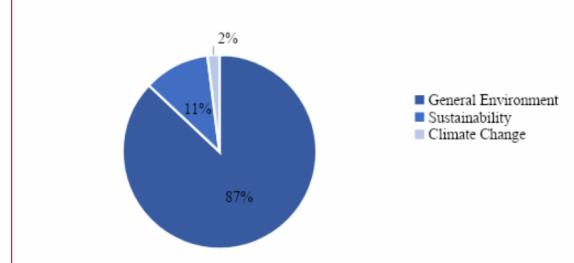


Figure 2. Distribution of Climate-related themes in Pakistan's National Curriculum Framework and Education Sector Plans - UNESCO

The Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education (MECCE) Project examined Pakistan's National Curriculum Framework (2018), National Education Policy (Education Sector Plan; 2017), and National Education Policy Framework (2018) for keywords related to 'climate change,' 'environment,' 'sustainability,' and 'biodiversity.' Figure 2 displays the presence of these keywords in the mentioned documents. None of these documents examines biodiversity. Any of the aforementioned keywords are not referred to in the NCF, while the keyword 'sustainability' is referenced 20 times, and both, 'environment' and 'climate change' are referenced one time each in the NEP (2017).<sup>20</sup>

Successive governments have undertaken various initiatives to improve progress towards SDG 4. However, various challenges such as economic conditions, population growth, poverty, and climate change impede and many times erode achieved progress. Educational institutions can serve as key platforms where climate change education and awareness can be provided to build the capacity of communities at risk as well as promote environmental stewardship and the role of behavioral change at the individual level.

## 2. PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2023-24 published by the Ministry of Finance, the total public expenditure for education by allocated by the federal and provincial governments has increased from approximately US\$2.506 billion in 2016-17 to approximately US\$4.524 billion in 2022-23.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 3. Public expenditure on Education from 2006-07 to 2022-23

18 CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

19 CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION TO BE INTRODUCED IN ISLAMABAD SCHOOLS

20 CLIMATE CHANGE COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION, UNESCO

21 PAKISTAN ECONOMIC SURVEY, 2023-24

While this appears to be an increase at first glance, it is still only 1.5% of the GDP; well below the international best practice of 4% of GDP. Further analysis shows that development education expenditure is less than 11% of the 1.5% of GDP allocated to the sector. Meanwhile, while necessary, 89% of the total education budget is allocated to recurrent expenditures including salaries and pensions, it leaves mere crumbs for the transformation of the education sector in the country.

Education and climate change nexus. Pakistan's high vulnerability to climate change and recurrent climate disasters has derailed much progress made towards SDG 4. The devastating impacts are evident in school closures and infrastructure damage as well as shrinking public expenditure space for education. This has resulted in higher dropout rates, learning losses, disproportionately impacting girls, children from poor households, transgenders and persons with disabilities.<sup>22</sup>

Education amidst disasters. The education sector has been undermined by recurrent climate events in different parts of the country leading to damage to schools, disruption in learning cycles and higher dropout rates. The Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) report published by the Ministry of Planning and Development in October 2022, revealed that 17,205 educational institutions were affected with nearly 6,225 educational institutions fully and 10,980 partially damaged, disrupting the education of 2.6 million children including over a million girls.<sup>23</sup> Sindh, followed by Balochistan, experienced the most damage and the majority of worst-hit areas were home to the most vulnerable and impoverished quantile. With monsoon season approaching and climate change intensifying, these communities are facing the threat of further education and infrastructure losses.

In 2021, a research study titled "Climate Induced Migration Among Women" was published by SDPI (Sustainable Development Policy Institute) to assess the impact of the 2020 floods on women in two districts i.e Muzaffargarh and Tharparkar. A young female respondent elaborated on the impact of climate change on her education:

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*It was my last year of high school and I was supposed to appear in Board exams. Suddenly, floods inundated the area. We lost everything, including our house, fields, and livestock. When we settled back, my parents arranged my marriage. Had the situation been normal, I could have done my graduation to go for a better future.<sup>24</sup>*

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Resource redirection and shrinking education financing. The sector faces a dual financing challenge. While vulnerability to climate change has increased, the majority of federal and provincial education budgets remain reserved for current expenditures, leaving almost only 10% of the development budget for reconstruction, retrofitting of institutions, adoption of innovative technologies, teacher capacity building, etc. This financial division also hampers climate-resilient education institutions and the inability to leverage them as forums to develop a community response to climate change through education. The other challenge is that Pakistan's struggling economy has shrunk fiscal space for investment in education and education is being pushed down the priority agenda delaying the introduction of climate change education in the curriculum.

The federal government had initially announced a significant cut in the budget for the Higher Education Commission (HEC) which was later reversed. The budget for HEC has been restored to US\$143.3 million approximately without any change compared to 2023.<sup>25</sup> However the former, despite its reversal will inevitably have negative impacts such as a decrease in the morale of educators, higher education standards, learning outcomes, service delivery and availability of teachers in far-flung areas where the number of higher education institutions is already limited.

At the same time, the global community's support for education financing is also dwindling as climate funds/assistance is not proportionately addressing green and resilient education. A report by the Global Partnership for Education highlights that from 2003-2021, the overall proportion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for education has decreased from 14.7% to 9.7% while climate-induced education vulnerability has exponentially increased.<sup>26</sup>

While the UNESCO-led Greening Education Partnership has been advocating for increasing investment in education through national and international collaborations, there has been no specific mechanism developed to ensure it.<sup>27</sup> In such a case, increasing access to resilient education for a debt-ridden and IMF conditionality-bound country like Pakistan is nearly impossible. Moreover, in the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan and "Education Cannot Wait" Conference 2023, the global community acknowledged Pakistan's vulnerability to climate-induced disasters to which it makes a nominal contribution. However, no commitment has so far been made to education financing. Even the climate financing committed in Geneva Pledges were loans that would only add to the country's financial burden.<sup>28</sup>

Government initiatives for climate change education. Pakistan has ratified the Paris Agreement and under Article 12<sup>29</sup> Pakistan is required to take measures for building public awareness and preparedness regarding climate change through climate change education (CCE). At the Federal level, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2023 presented by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MOCC) stressed that CCE should bolster adaptation capacity and enable an early community response to climate events in the following terms:

**"Build Capacity and Knowledge:** To achieve successful climate adaptation, it is crucial to build capacity and knowledge at all levels. This includes investing in research, education, and training to equip decision-makers, professionals, and communities with the tools and understanding needed to implement effective adaptation strategies."<sup>30</sup>

The NAP 2023 also calls for streamlining climate change in education sector plans at provincial and local level curricula in accordance with Pakistan's international commitments. It also suggests periodic assessments for updated data on vulnerability and resilience indicators especially for institutions in high-risk areas and consolidating data on education-day losses, student absenteeism, and other impacts following extreme weather events.

<sup>25</sup> DAWN, 2024

<sup>26</sup> STEPPING UP FINANCE TO GET EVERY LEARNER CLIMATE-READY

<sup>27</sup> DECLARATION ON THE COMMON AGENDA FOR EDUCATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE AT COP28

<sup>28</sup> 90% GENEVA PLEDGES ARE LOANS, NOT AID

<sup>29</sup> THE PARIS AGREEMENT

<sup>30</sup> NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLAN (NAP)

The NAP 2023 also emphasises building workforce capacity to foster climate resilience by integrating CCE at all education levels, imparting crucial life skills to enable early response and vocational and technical skills needed to capture green job opportunities. Providing technical and vocational skills among high-risk communities can be essential in enabling them to find employment and livelihood rehabilitation.

Although there is no specific policy developed for the integration of CCE in adult or informal education, climate education and increasing awareness about climate change through campaigns, has been addressed in the Climate Change Policy 2021 presented by MoCC. The policy aims to leverage mass media to boost community engagement and awareness under the National Climate Change Awareness Program as part of informal education on climate change.<sup>31</sup>

The Directorate General of Basic Education Community Schools (BECS), under the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, provides free, non-formal education based on a single classroom and teacher model. It has announced plans to include climate change in its teaching. Meanwhile, the National Curriculum Framework (2018) and National Education Policy (2017) use the term 'climate change' while the National Education Policy Framework does not even use the term.

The provincial responses have been somewhat weak for the adoption of CCE as part of the curriculum. However, the announcement of climate change as a separate subject in southern Punjab's public schools by the School Education Department in 2022 is a much-appreciated step in the right direction. This needs to be scaled up across the province and country. The government of Sindh has also announced the introduction of climate change as a separate subject in universities, details remain elusive while Balochistan and KP are yet to take any such measures.

### III. CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN THE SDG 4 IMPLEMENTATION, FOLLOW-UP, AND MONITORING

**SDG 4 - 'Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education for All' stands as a fundamental pillar to societal progress and its attainment requires concerted efforts from multi-sectoral stakeholders.** In Pakistan where a multitude of challenges confronts the education sector, the active engagement of CSOs remains crucial in ensuring access to inclusive and equitable quality education.

In June 2022, Pakistan faced massive floods, affecting about 1/3 of the country, resulting in mass destruction of infrastructure. Education remained among the most affected sectors and estimates suggest that it endured damages worth US\$559 million.<sup>32</sup> About 26,000 schools were destroyed with 7,060 schools being used as temporary shelters, disrupting the education of more than 3.5 million children.<sup>33</sup>

Emergencies in the past few years such as the pandemic and climate-induced disasters have highlighted the strong impact on the education sector, as the toll of OOSC has risen to 26.2 million<sup>34</sup> from a previously recorded 22.8 million.<sup>35</sup> Hence, the need to focus on making education more resilient to climate-induced disasters is urgent now more than ever.

SDG 4, target 4.7 emphasises equipping learners with the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. It states:

"By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."<sup>36</sup>

Recognising this target, a shift has occurred around the globe, from education focused on traditional numeracy and literacy to a more holistic, well-rounded and competency-based system, which equips individuals with skills and knowledge to promote sustainability. Climate change remains a major threat to sustainability; hence, 'Climate Change Education' or 'Green Curriculum' is crucial to providing individuals with the knowledge and skills to act on climate change and promote sustainable lifestyles.

Pakistan has a vibrant civil society landscape with numerous CSOs ranging from large NGOs to local community groups actively working on the implementation of SDG 4. They have been collectively advocating for due reforms to incorporate the CCE curriculum at national and sub-national levels, through:

-  **Organising awareness campaigns and workshops to build knowledge of local stakeholders.**
-  **Engaging in dialogues with policymakers to influence education policies and practices.**
-  **Contributing to policy development, implementation, and evaluation by leveraging their grassroots networks and expertise.**
-  **Collaborating with governmental bodies to develop age-appropriate and context-specific curricula and education material on climate change.**
-  **Organising training workshops for teachers on effective delivery of CCE content.**
-  **Providing alternative learning programs/digital courses for students to learn about Climate Change.**

Various examples exist of CSOs actively advocating for the introduction of CCE. A strong example is the advocacy campaign launched by the Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) - post-floods. A huge part of it involved capacity building of grassroots stakeholders in disaster-prone districts to advocate for a climate-resilient education system. Backed by a rapid research study titled 'Towards a Resilient Education Recovery from Pakistan's Floods', PCE engaged in dialogues with policymakers to make education a key priority and the inclusion of climate change education in the curriculum. Through concerted efforts of PCE and partners, the PM has declared an emergency to address Pakistan's education crisis.

<sup>31</sup> NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

<sup>32</sup> PAKISTAN FLOODS 2022 - POST-DISASTER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

<sup>33</sup> SCHOOL'S OUT - REUTERS 2022

<sup>34</sup> PAKISTAN EDUCATION STATISTICS 2021-22

<sup>35</sup> UNICEF-PAKISTAN

<sup>36</sup> SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK (SDSN)

The 'Clean Green School Program' by WaterAid, jointly implemented by the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) and the Ministry of Climate Change, aims for action-based learning at schools on climate literacy and environmental education in creative and meaningful ways – including activity-based, child-friendly curricula. Beyond these government-led initiatives, World Wildlife Fund Pakistan leads a 'Green Schools Program,' which includes 'Green School' certifications and activities to educate children regarding environment conservation.

Even with these initiatives, progress on CCE remains slow and dismal due to low government stakes. Several mechanisms exist in Pakistan to monitor progress on SDG 4 indicators. CSOs actively participate in government-led SDG 4 monitoring processes by helping:

- Consolidate data on specific education indicators to enable effective monitoring. CSO participation in the development of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) is a clear manifestation of this, as they actively support government bodies in data gathering and analysis on education progress.
- Participate in consultative groups and committees like Local Education Groups (LEG), and SDG follow-up meetings for the analysis and development of Education Sector Plans (ESPs).
- CSOs also undertake independent monitoring initiatives to track progress on specific SDG 4 targets - focusing on areas where government data might be limited. One such example is the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), which is a large citizen-led, household-based initiative to measure changes in essential learning and school statistics and to interpret results to support data-driven policy formulation at various levels. However, it does not monitor CCE indicators.



CSOs face numerous challenges in promoting CCE in Pakistan, which include:

- Funding constraints limit CSOs from developing and implementing large-scale CCE programs.
- Limited participation in decision-making spaces, lack of clear communication, bureaucratic hurdles, and differing priorities of government stakeholders.
- Lack of monitoring frameworks to track progress on CCE programs.
- Government regulatory policies and stringent sanctions lead to shrinking CSO spaces.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The inclusion of climate change and its current trends should be urgently prioritised across all educational levels. Furthermore, the introduction of climate change education (CCE) as a separate subject must be ensured in the upcoming academic year nationwide.
- The government should develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that incorporates CCE, essential life skills training and emergency and disaster response training across all formal and non-formal education institutions nationwide. This strategy must be designed with a gender-sensitive approach, considering the heightened vulnerability of women and children to climate change and emergencies to universally empower the population with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively respond to and mitigate the challenges posed by climate change and disasters.
- Given the evolving nature and intensity of climate change, it is crucial that the curriculum be regarded as a dynamic body of knowledge. This curriculum must be regularly updated to incorporate the latest information and indigenous knowledge so it can be customised to serve the local context and needs and can effectively serve the actual local stakeholders.
- Federal and provincial governments must commit to allocating a specific percentage of the education budget for CCE, teacher training, curriculum development etc. to ensure the effective implementation and sustainability of CCE initiatives.
- Development partners should direct climate finance through the Federal Development Authority (FDA) towards climate change education (CCE) to enable active inclusion and engagement of the younger demographic in climate action initiatives.
- To facilitate data-driven policy analysis by researchers, academia, policymakers and CSOs, the government must ensure the availability of credible gender-disaggregated data available through consolidated public data portals and any data consolidated as it is the property of the people of Pakistan.
- Design and implement a comprehensive social media awareness campaign to increase public awareness and education regarding climate change, including dissemination of early warnings, response strategies, emergency contact helplines etc.
- Adopt a gender-sensitive approach for CCE to raise awareness of diverse gendered impacts of climate change, especially in terms of drop-out rates and hurdles in girls' education.
- Develop robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and ensure accountability in the implementation of climate change education and related initiatives.
- Establish an intergovernmental panel that includes representatives from the Federal Ministry of Climate Change, provincial education departments, and environmental experts to discuss the integration of climate change education across all provinces.
- A "Green School Program" is needed that incentivizes schools to adopt eco-friendly practices, including tree plantation, waste management, and energy conservation. \*