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**A Comparative Analysis of Gender,  
Inclusion, & Resilience in the System**





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# **PAKISTAN'S EDUCATION SECTOR PLANS:**

**A Comparative Analysis of Gender,  
Inclusion, & Resilience in the System**

**SEPTEMBER 2023**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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**01**

Education Sector Plans: Key Challenges & Opportunities

**03**

**02**

Gender Responsiveness in Pakistan's Education Sector Plans

**12**

**03**

Resilience in Pakistan's Education Sector Plans

**14**

**04**

Measures for Greater Inclusion in Pakistan's Education Sector Plans

**17**

**05**

Education Sector Financing and Its Link to Key Aspects

**19**

**06**

Cross-Sectional Analysis: Interplay of Key Aspects

**22**

**07**

Cross-Sectional Analysis: Interplay of Key Aspects

**23**

**08**

Conclusion

**25**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an analysis of the education sector plans in the four major provinces of Pakistan: Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab and Sindh. The scope of this analysis focuses on assessing the provisions for gender-responsive, resilient and inclusive education in Pakistan's education sector planning.

Findings reveal that the provinces share common challenges in the realm of access, quality, and the governance of education.

## Gender-responsiveness in Education Sector Plans

All four provinces recognize the importance of incorporating gender considerations in education policies, including safe facilities, female teacher recruitment, and gender-sensitive curricula. However, there are significant gaps in implementation. The provinces lack gender-disaggregated education data to inform the planning and decision-making processes. Similarly, except KP, none of the provinces have gender-responsive education budgets making it impossible to assess how gender was factored into the planning, and implementation phases. Although stipends to encourage greater enrolment and retention of female students is a common strategy, the sector plans do not define effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure their efficient disbursement to and receipt by deserving households. This is especially important as data emerging from Sindh suggests that over 50% of the eligible recipients of education stipends have not claimed these funds.

To address gender-related challenges, provinces should establish gender-specific performance indicators, integrate gender-responsive planning, prioritise female student safety, and set time-bound goals for infrastructure improvement.

## Resilience in Education Sector Plans

This assessment reflects the four provinces' shared recognition of resilience in education. They all emphasise integrating climate education into the curriculum to empower students. Disaster-resilient infrastructure is also identified as a key intervention strategy.

A comprehensive approach to resilience is, however, lacking. Mere curriculum integration isn't sufficient; flexibility in learning methods for emergencies is needed. Digital infrastructure for teachers and students during crises is overlooked. Community-led planning, partnerships with relevant entities, psycho-social support, and early warning systems are also absent in the sector plans, indicating significant room for improvement. Finally, focus on climate resilience alone is not enough. Resilience needs to be viewed more holistically, taking into account the entire spectrum of emergencies that can potentially impact the functioning of the education system. Among others, these include epidemics, pandemics and conflict.

## Inclusion in Education Sector Plans

All the provinces also aspire to achieve disability-inclusive education systems. The provinces aim to create inclusive classrooms in mainstream schools and have special education centres for students with disabilities. Teacher training in inclusive methods and accessible infrastructure is also prioritized across all the provincial sector plans.

However, there are several shared gaps in addressing physical and social barriers to making the education system truly inclusive. Most notably, inclusion is narrowly defined to only focus on disabilities, overlooking other critical dimensions like gender, religion, language, and ethnicity.

## Key Recommendations

Based on this analysis, to enhance Pakistan's education sector planning, an integrated approach is recommended, focusing on National Education Policy (NEP) implementation to ensure inclusivity, gender responsiveness, and resilience in provincial education plans. Robust quality assurance mechanisms should be established for evaluating teacher and student performance while promoting inclusive, gender-responsive, and environmentally conscious curricula. Teacher training in inclusive education, resilience, and gender sensitivity is crucial. A comprehensive data collection system, disaggregated by gender and disability status, is also urgently needed to monitor progress.

Strengthening inter-provincial collaboration can serve as the key to achieving the above goals more swiftly. This would allow the provinces to learn actively from each other's good practices and routinely exchange knowledge and expertise on critical issues. This can also enable the provinces to engage in collective advocacy for greater resource allocation for education from the federal government as well as international donors.

The report in hand strives to serve as a guide for both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to facilitate their reflection on enhancing future education sector plans in Pakistan. The goal is to ensure that these plans comprehensively address the needs of gender minorities, embrace a more holistic approach to inclusive education, and genuinely fortify the education sector against any future shocks.

## Note for the Readers

To navigate this report, readers are encouraged to begin with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented in the Education Sector Plans, as outlined in Section 1. The overview of Provincial Education Sector Plans provides a foundation (Section 1.1), with key observations summarized in Section 1.2.

Following this, Section 2 explores the significance of gender-responsive education. This chapter provides insights into the province-wise breakdown and analysis of gender-responsiveness in the Education Sector Plans (Sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3).

Section 3 will enable the readers to grasp the concept of resilient education by unpacking its definition, and importance, and exploring the province-wise breakdown and analysis in the Education Sector Plans (Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3).

Next, Section 4 is dedicated to inclusive education and its importance, with a detailed breakdown and analysis of inclusion in the Education Sector Plans across provinces (Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3).

Proceeding to Section 5, the readers will receive insights into education sector financing in Pakistan. An analysis of public investment in gender-responsive, resilient, and inclusive education brings this section full circle (Sections 5.1 and 5.2).

For a holistic understanding, the readers should delve into Section 6, which offers a cross-sectional analysis of the interplay between key aspects in the Education Sector Plans (Section 6.1).

Finally, the recommendations in Section 7 and the concluding remarks in Section 8 glean actionable insights and a summary of key findings from the report.

# 1. EDUCATION SECTOR PLANS: KEY CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

## Status of Education in Pakistan

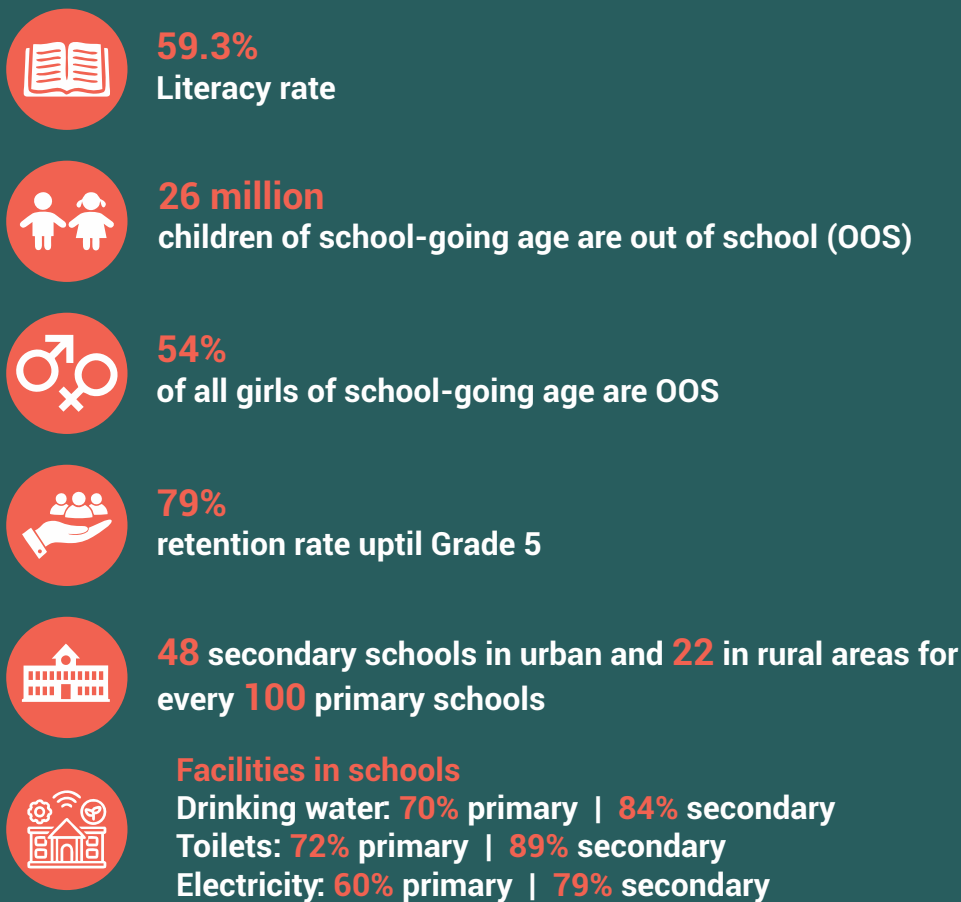


Figure 1: Status of Education in Pakistan

### 1.1 Overview of the Provincial Education Sector Plans

Pakistan's education landscape is punctuated with multifaceted challenges as well as several promising opportunities that hold the potential to transform the country's literacy and skill development woes.

This overview delves into the issues identified in the education sector plans of the four major provinces of Pakistan, i.e., Balochistan, KP, Punjab and Sindh and the priorities identified therein to leverage available opportunities. In this chapter as well as the remainder of the report, our analyses will especially focus on measures identified in the education sector plans aimed at a gender-responsive, resilient and inclusive education system.

## Balochistan

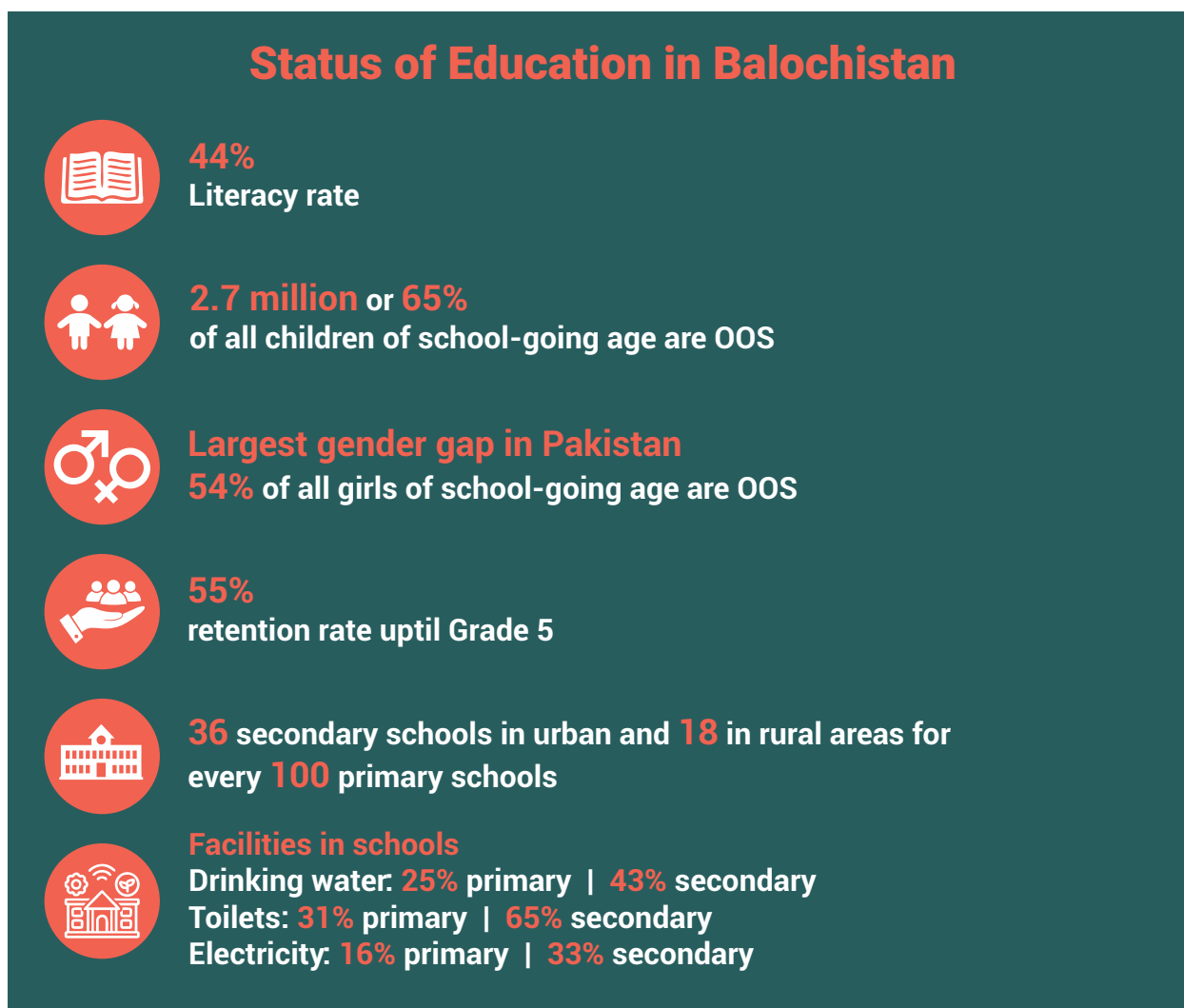


Figure 2: State of Education in Balochistan

Balochistan's Education Sector Plan divides its challenges into four groups, i.e., access, learning and participation; data and research, governance and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET). The sector plan acknowledges that with 65% of girls of school-going age being out of school, the province has the largest gender gap in education in Pakistan. The lack of schools and related facilities is cited as the leading cause for this glaring disparity.

Reflecting on the absence of reliable data, the sector plan highlights a “huge disconnect between the realities of the child, the needs of the society and the design and execution of education services.”

The document also notes that “increased spending on education has not translated into improved learning outcomes due to poor governance and weak management capacity of the education system.” Poor quality of education is also mentioned as a core issue responsible for the “low absorption of TVET graduates in the market.”





Figure 3: Priority Areas as Defined in Balochistan's Education Sector Plan 2020-25

Balochistan's Education Sector Plan places high priority on enhancing learning outcomes and ensuring greater access and participation, while also recognizing the crucial role of improved governance and data quality in achieving an efficient and effective education system.

Additionally, the plan addresses four overarching aspects of education delivery – standards, capacity building, gender inclusivity, and partnerships with non-governmental entities – which are integrated throughout the entire plan.

In the context of technical and vocational education, the primary goal is to provide modern training programs that align with the demands of the job market, with a specific focus on quality, relevance, and accessibility.

Furthermore, the sector plan pledges to “place the child at the core of its reform efforts,” emphasizing their well-being both within and outside of the school environment, paying particular attention to the needs of girls.

## Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

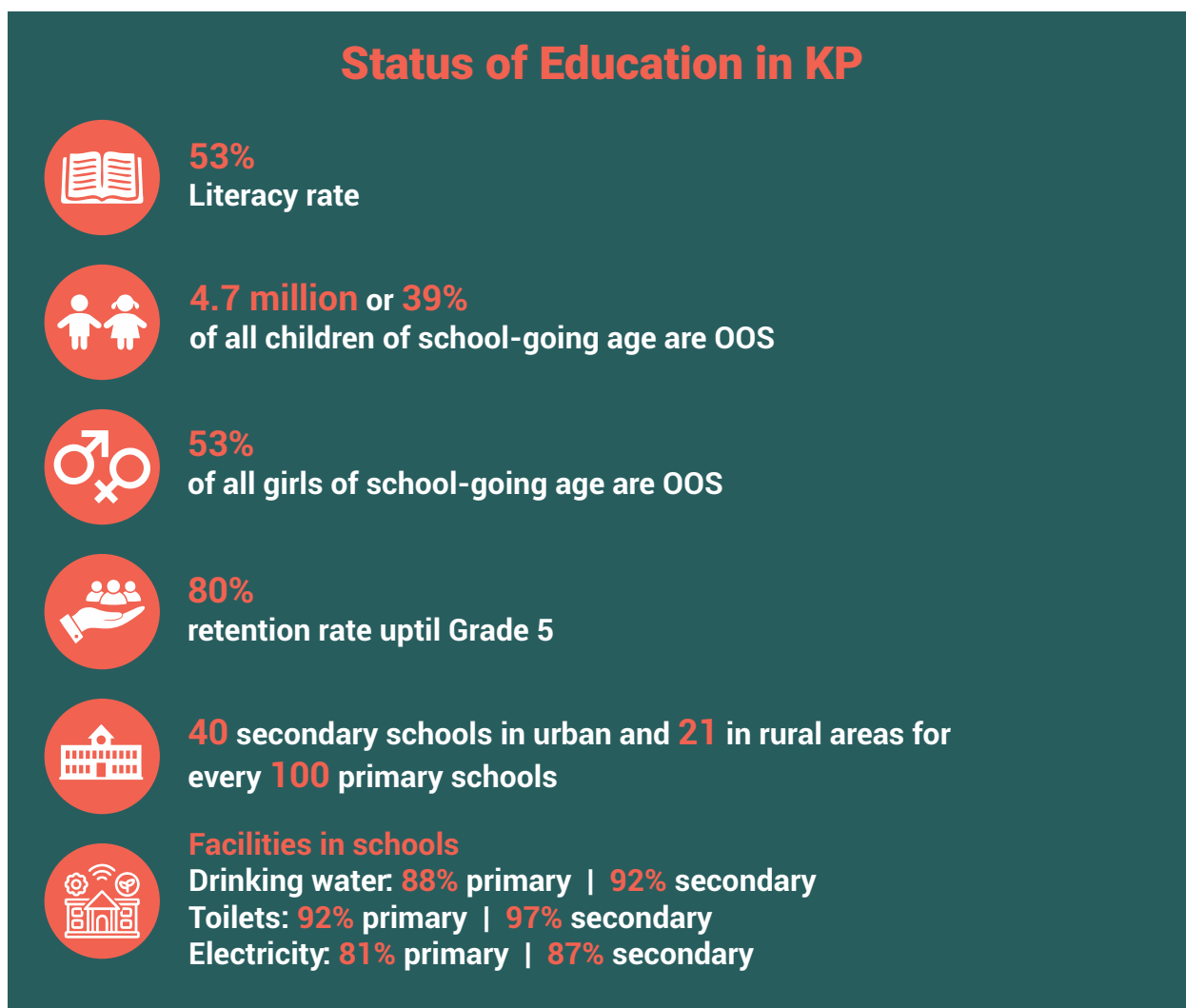


Figure 4: State of Education in KP

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Education Sector Plan defines provincial challenges under the larger themes of access, retention and equity, quality and relevance, and governance and management.

The sector plan outlines a set of essential strategies for the improvement and enhancement of the provincial education system.

To address issues of enrolment and retention, a strategy of incentivized education is proposed, with a particular focus on children from marginalized groups.

Quality education is a central theme in these objectives, with a strong emphasis on effective teaching and learning processes and the creation of a conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, the plan envisions the strengthening of provincial-level institutions to ensure efficient service delivery within the sector. Collaboration, evidence-based decision-making, and accountability are highlighted as crucial management practices for attaining educational goals. Lastly, the plan calls for the empowerment of district and local-level education governance and management, promoting localized decision-making and enhanced accountability to improve overall educational performance.

## Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Plan: Priority Areas



### ACCESS, RETENTION AND EQUITY

Provide equitable and free access from pre-primary to secondary education to all children, using both formal and non-formal approaches.

Provide incentivized education to enhance enrolment and ensure retention of children from marginalized groups.



### QUALITY & RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION

Ensure that all children learn and acquire age-appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours in line with emerging national and international needs.

Provide quality education through more effective teaching and learning processes and a conducive learning environment.



### GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Strengthen provincial level institutions for effective service delivery.

Provide evidence based, collaborative and accountable management for the attainment of education.

Empower district and local level education governance and management to improve performance.

Figure 5: Priority Areas as Defined in KP's Education Sector Plan 2020-25

## Punjab

In Punjab, successive governments have implemented reforms to enhance the public education sector's performance. However, as the sector plan acknowledges, several glaring challenges continue to hamper the province's ability to provide free and quality education to all children of school-going age.

Both demand and supply-side issues keep 10.5 million children out of school across Punjab. Regional disparities are stark, the large majority of OOSC hail from the southern districts of Rahim Yar Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur. Similarly, girls are less likely to enrol, and more likely to drop out earlier than boys. For every 100 students enrolled in *Katchi* grade, only 28 students remain until Grade 10 (31% for boys and 25% for girls).

Punjab's Education Sector Plan also identifies learning deficiencies, especially in overcrowded and multi-grade classrooms as a huge concern. The provincial government acknowledges that a lack of quality education is among the leading drivers of post-primary drop-outs in the province.

Finally, the sector plan cites weak governance as a key challenge hampering efforts to enhance both access to education and improve its quality in Punjab.

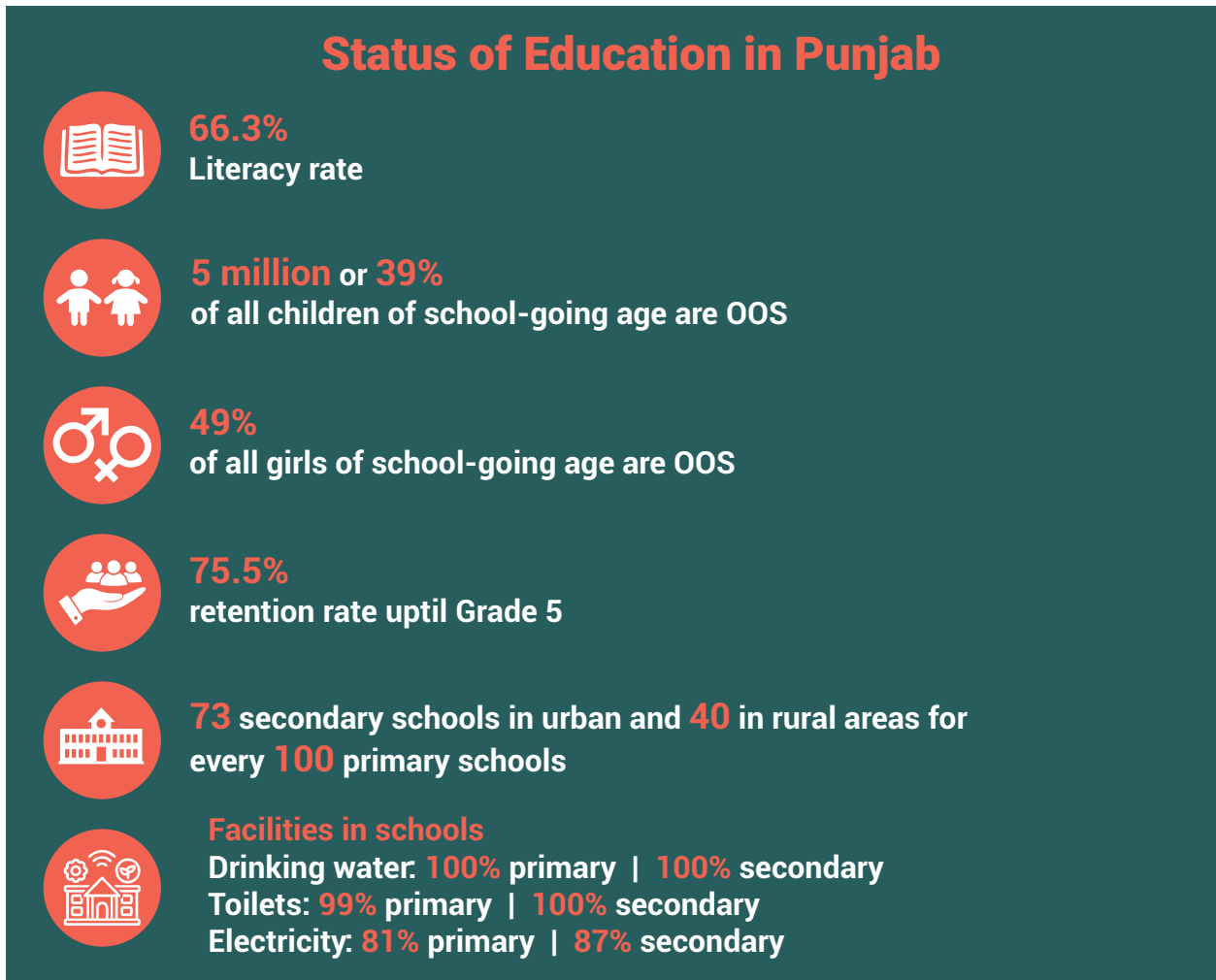


Figure 6: State of Education in Punjab



Figure 7: Priority Areas as Defined in Punjab's Education Sector Plan 2019-24

To rectify these challenges, Punjab's Education Sector Plan pledges to work towards a learning environment that is, "safe, inclusive and conducive" to facilitate the delivery of quality education for all. The document also emphasises the need for enhanced teacher training programs, and making schools disability-inclusive to make quality education accessible to all children of school-going age. Strengthening governance remains a cross-cutting priority throughout the sector plan.

## Sindh

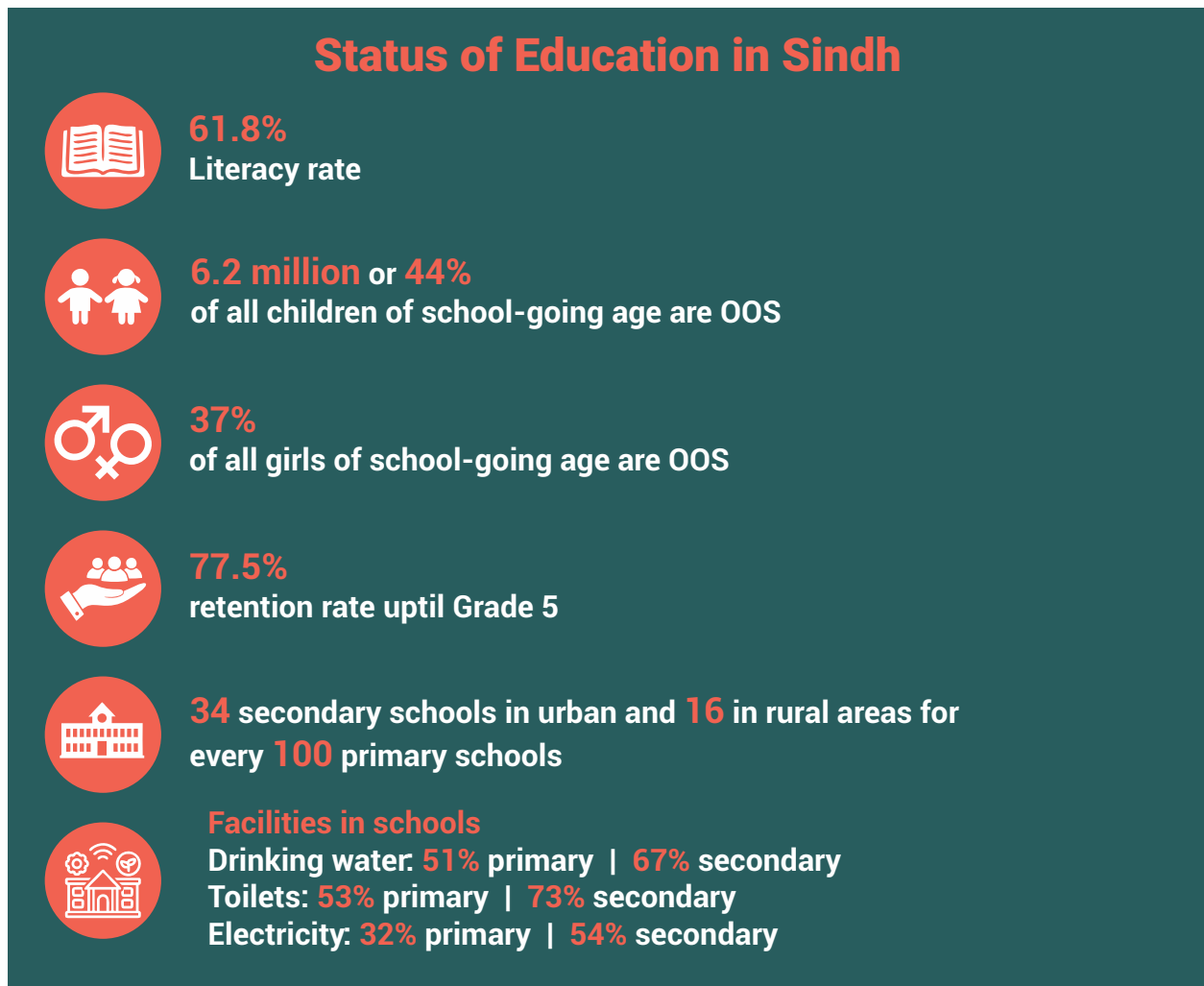


Figure 8: State of Education in Sindh

Like Punjab, Sindh's Education Sector Plan also divides its challenges under three umbrella themes, i.e., access, quality and governance. Under the access issues, low participation and retention, a huge population of OOS, low literacy rate among youth, and lack of equitable educational infrastructure have been cited as the primary challenges.

Under the theme of quality and learning, low educational achievements of students, a lack of teacher training opportunities, and scarcity of female and subject-specialist teachers are defined as the leading concerns. The non-alignment of the curriculum with identified learning priorities in the previous sector plan has also been quoted as a key challenge in the way of improving the overall quality of education in the province.

Challenges identified in the way of better governance include the scale of work vs. a lack of resources, capacity constraints and political interference. Low utilization of development budgets due to high levels of scrutiny on spending and the absence of a dedicated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit are also cited as challenges.

## Sindh Education Sector Plan: Priority Areas



### ACCESS

Increase equitable access to formal, non-formal and TVET programs.

Expand school infrastructure to meet needs and ensure learning-friendly environment.

Increase equitable enrolment and retention at all levels, especially for girls and marginalized children.



### QUALITY & LEARNING

Meritorious recruitment of qualified teachers, and cluster based continuous professional development.

Alignment of the curriculum with local needs and global trends, inclusive education and life skills, gender equality, cultural diversity and citizenship.



### GOVERNANCE

Strengthen performance, accountability mechanisms.

Transparent and sustainable allocation and utilisation of non-salary budget.

Improve organizational capacity and resources for integrated sector planning.

Figure 9: Priority Areas as Defined in Sindh's Education Sector Plan 2019-24

Sindh's Education Sector Plan focuses on several critical priority areas aimed at addressing key challenges within the education system. These priorities encompass improving equitable access to formal education for OOSC, and ensuring that educational opportunities are accessible to all. Additionally, the plan underscores the importance of NFE programs and establishing connections with TVET to empower illiterate youth with essential skills.

Expanding school infrastructure is another core focus, driven by the need to provide a conducive learning environment that caters to evidence-based requirements. Equitable enrolment and retention, particularly for marginalized children and girls, are fundamental goals, as is the recruitment of qualified teachers and their support within an efficient, and well-resourced education system.

The plan also includes the implementation of cluster-based Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers, headteachers, and administrators. It also talks about curriculum enhancements that encompass local needs, global trends, gender equality, cultural diversity, and citizenship.

Establishing management mechanisms to enhance performance and accountability, transparent and sustainable allocation, and utilization of non-salary budgets are identified as essential components to strengthen education governance in the province. Lastly, the plan seeks to enhance organizational capacity and resources for integrated sector planning, district planning, implementation, and quality assurance.

## 1.2 Key Observations

All the provincial education sector plans strive to define the key issues facing the educational landscape in their jurisdiction. While the arrangements of themes or clustering of issues might vary, equitable access, quality and governance remain recurring features across every province's education planning.

Similarly, mitigation strategies common to all provinces involve improving teaching practices, revising curricula, enhancing teacher quality, strengthening assessments, and promoting equitable access. Additionally, there is a shared emphasis on addressing gender disparities through initiatives such as stipends for girls, female literacy centres, and technical and vocational education for girls.

In contrast to other provinces, Balochistan's sector plan separately highlights the need for data and research, as well as the necessity for high-quality TVET programs. This difference might be attributed to the fact that, as acknowledged in its sector plan, Balochistan lags significantly behind Punjab, Sindh, and KP in terms of addressing data-related issues and providing technical skills to its students.

Regarding the specific focus of this report, which is gender-responsive, resilient and inclusive education, the sector plans present a mixed bag of strategies. While all sector plans mention the mitigation of gender disparities in education, they tend to overlook the crucial aspect of gender responsiveness during the planning phase, including gender-responsive budgeting. Although resilience is a cross-cutting theme in the sector plans, none of them specifically identify resilient education as a key challenge or a priority area. Similarly, in terms of inclusion, the sector plans predominantly concentrate on disability-friendly services and bridging the urban-rural gap. However, they tend to neglect other dimensions of inclusion, such as linguistic diversity, the inclusion of transgender students, and the representation of ethnic and religious minorities.



“ In addressing gender disparities, resilience, and inclusion in education, plans often overlook crucial aspects like gender-responsive budgeting and diverse dimensions of inclusion. ”

# 2. GENDER RESPONSIVENESS IN PAKISTAN'S EDUCATION SECTOR PLANS

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## 2.1 Significance of Gender-Responsive Education

Gender-responsive education is vital for promoting equality and inclusive socio-economic development, recognizing that gender-based disparities can hinder access to quality education, especially for girls and women. It aligns with human rights principles and legal obligations, breaking the cycle of poverty by empowering girls and women economically, improving health and challenging harmful gender norms. It also enhances political participation among women, fostering a more equitable society that challenges regressive norms and stereotypes. In Pakistan, gender-responsive education holds immense potential to drive positive change and create a more just and equal society.

## 2.2 Province-wise Breakdown of Gender-responsiveness in the Education Sector Plans

### Balochistan

Balochistan's education sector plan recognizes the vast disparity in terms of access to education in the province. It also acknowledges the limitations in its textbooks that “offer gender-biased stereotypes and other perspectives that can negatively impact inclusion.”

The sector plan pledges to bridge the gender gap by establishing more girls' schools, prioritizing the recruitment of female teachers and providing safe transport facilities for female students. The sector plan also focuses on community involvement to promote girls' education.

### Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's education sector plan focuses on providing financial incentives for girls to attend school, with a focus on increasing enrolment in marginalized areas. The plan also pledges community campaigns and the establishment of female literacy centres to boost literacy among women and girls who have missed out on formal schooling.

Despite being the only province engaging in partial gender-responsive education budgeting, the process is yet to set targeted indicators for the enrolment and retention of girls. This is especially important in the paradigm of the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) where girls' participation in education at all levels is among the lowest in Pakistan. The safety and security of girls' schools is also an important concern that has not been addressed in the sector plan. There has been a resurgence of attacks on girls' schools with the most recent attack taking place in May 2023 when two girls' government middle schools were blown up in the middle of the night in North Waziristan. This caused a setback to the educational prospects of 500 girls. This demands prudent planning and stringent implementation to prevent extremist elements from disrupting the education of girls in the conflict-prone districts of the province.

### Punjab

Punjab's education sector plan places great emphasis on gender equity with a focus on girls' education as a prominent theme across all programmatic priorities. Some of the strategies employed to meet this end include girls' education stipends, educational complexes for women and girls, gender-sensitive pedagogies



to create an inclusive classroom environment that challenges gender stereotypes, and community campaigns to highlight the importance of girls' education.

Program Priority Area 3.2 also aims to provide “safe and protective behavioural practices,” within educational institutes. It also emphasises the need for data disaggregated by gender to “ensure that actions designed on analysis of data benefits all boys and girls.”

## Sindh

Sindh's Education Sector Plan also recognizes the significance of gender-responsive education and pledges to take several steps for its realization. These include conditional cash transfer programs to incentivize parents to send their daughters to school and ensure their regular attendance; increasing girls' enrolment, reducing dropout rates, and ensuring equitable access. The provincial sector plan also pledges gender-responsive school infrastructure such as toilets. Similar to Punjab, Sindh emphasises teacher training in gender-responsive teaching methodologies, ensuring that teachers create inclusive and supportive classroom environments.

### 2.3 Comparison of Gender-responsiveness in the Provincial Education Sector Plans

In comparing these provincial approaches to gender-responsive education, several patterns and lessons emerge. All four provinces recognize the importance of mainstreaming gender considerations in education policies and practices. This includes providing safe and separate facilities, promoting female teacher recruitment, and integrating gender-sensitive content into curricula. Teacher training in gender-sensitive pedagogies is also a common feature in the sector plans of all the provinces.

However, not much seems to have been achieved so far in these domains. For instance, education data from Punjab that is disaggregated by gender is yet to be made publicly available. Similarly, except KP, the education budgets of the remaining provinces are also not gender-responsive making it difficult to gauge how gender is prioritized during the planning, implementation and review processes.

All the sector plans talk about attaching financial incentives to encourage greater enrolment and retention of girls. However, monitoring mechanisms to gauge the effectiveness of stipend and conditional cash transfer programs also need to be embedded in the planning. This is especially important in view of emerging data coming from the Sindh government according to which, nearly half of the eligible recipients of education stipends have not yet claimed the stipend, despite it having been distributed.

Given the magnitude of the challenge, the provinces need to set gender-specific performance indicators and regularly monitor and evaluate the progress of gender-related initiatives to ensure their effectiveness. This last step can only become possible if gender-responsive programmatic and financial planning is integrated into the provincial education system.

The safety of female students, which is a prerequisite for ensuring their access to formal education is only mentioned in Punjab's sector plan. Several incidents of sexual violence and invasion of privacy that have surfaced from educational institutes across the country have left question marks on the system's ability to ensure safe education for its women and girls. This missing priority needs to be embedded in education planning across all the provinces. In the case of Punjab, where "safe education" is prioritized, there is a need to unpack this area and provide tangible ways to achieve it. The plans should make explicit references to a no-tolerance policy on sexual violence and set stringent feedback loops and response mechanisms to ensure the safety of female students.

Provinces like Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan have made efforts to improve infrastructure, including the establishment of Girls' Education Complexes and the construction of more girls' schools. However, this effort needs to be made more timebound with indicators set for the short, medium and long term to ensure steady progress. Related to this, the safety and security concerns specific to girls while at educational institutes remain an important missing link across all the provincial education sector plans and need due planning and consideration.

# 3. RESILIENCE IN PAKISTAN'S EDUCATION SECTOR PLANS

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## 3.1 Definition and Importance of a Resilient Education System

A resilient education system refers to an educational framework that acknowledges the impacts of climate, conflict and any other emergencies on learning environments and takes proactive measures to enhance the system's ability to cope with and adapt to these changes. This encompasses a wide range of strategies, policies, and practices designed to ensure that education remains accessible, effective, and safe in the face of shocks. A resilient education system not only protects educational infrastructure from risks but also equips students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to understand, mitigate, and respond to such challenges.

### Resilient Education

01

Flexible curriculum and learning modalities that can be adapted to different circumstances

02

Access and inclusivity regardless of socio-economic status, gender, location, or physical abilities

03

Teacher preparedness to handle disruptions in the education systems

04

Digital infrastructure including high speed internet for both teachers and students

05

Strong M&E mechanism to track learning outcomes and system's performance during and after crises

06

Community engagement to tailor education responses to the local context

07

Resource allocation to support resilience, emergency response and a contingency fund

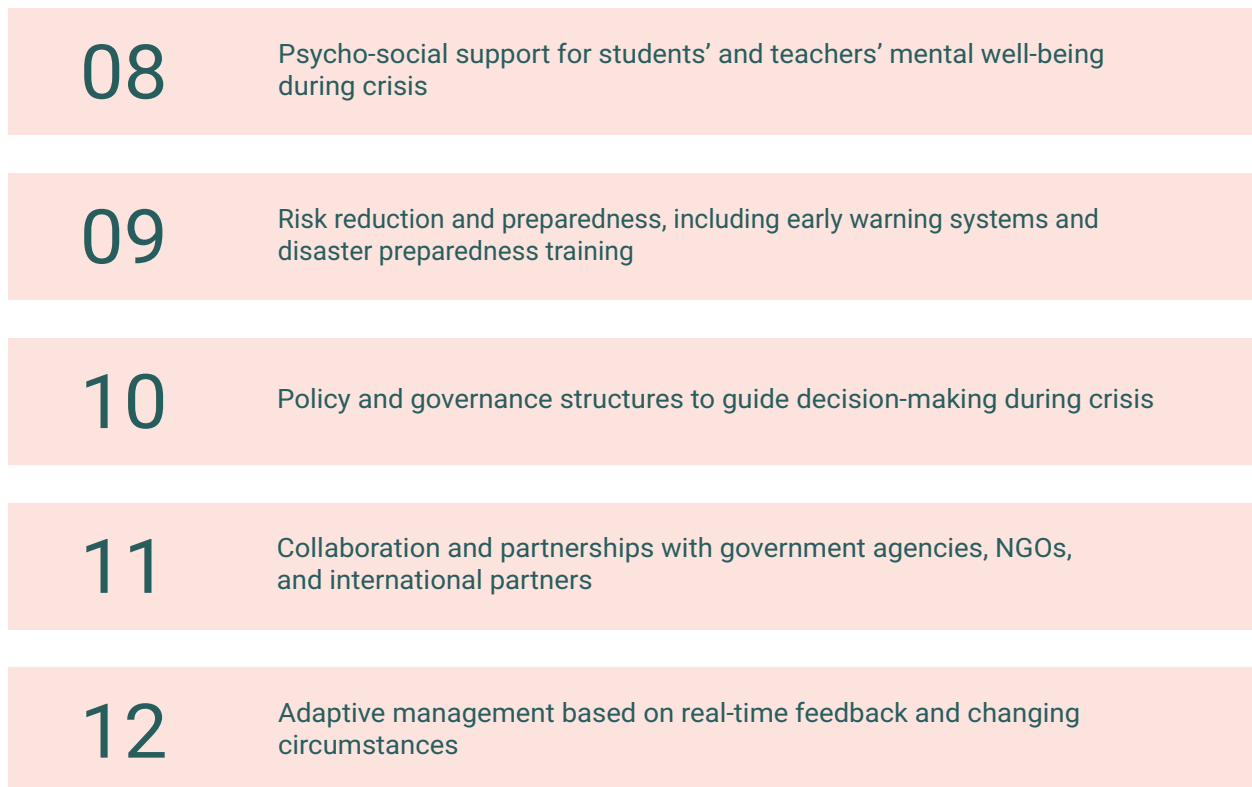


Figure 10: A Snapshot of a Resilient Education System

## 3.2 Province-wise Breakdown of Resilience in the Education Sector Plans

### Balochistan

Balochistan's education sector plan acknowledges the unique climate challenges faced by the province due to its vast geography and arid climate. The province places importance on incorporating climate resilience concepts into the curriculum to increase awareness among students about sustainable practices and climate adaptation. Balochistan's focus on sensitizing students to local climate issues aligns with the region's specific vulnerabilities.

However, there is room for further development in terms of infrastructure improvements and disaster preparedness strategies, particularly in areas prone to natural disasters. There is also a need to view resilient education more holistically rather than just focusing on climate-related emergencies.

### Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's education sector plan emphasises enhancing the resilience of both physical infrastructure and educational content. The education sector plan integrates climate change education into the curriculum, enabling students to comprehend and address climate-related challenges. Moreover, KP's initiatives include establishing model disaster-resilient schools that serve as examples for others to follow. This approach combines practical measures with educational efforts, aimed at creating a comprehensive climate-resilient education system.

### Punjab

The education sector plan of Punjab acknowledges the significance of climate resilience in education. Infrastructure development is a key aspect of climate resilience, with a focus on constructing disaster-resistant schools that can withstand extreme weather events. The education sector plan has also delegated

the task of designing teacher training modules focused on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) to the Quality Assurance and Education Development (QAED) body. These modules, however, require updates to align with evolving DRR priorities and are yet to be finalized. Additionally, the province has also pledged to incorporate climate change education into curricula to foster an understanding of climate-related challenges and solutions. More importantly, the sector plan pledges for teachers to be trained on handling emergencies, and students to be educated on how to respond during natural disasters.

## Sindh

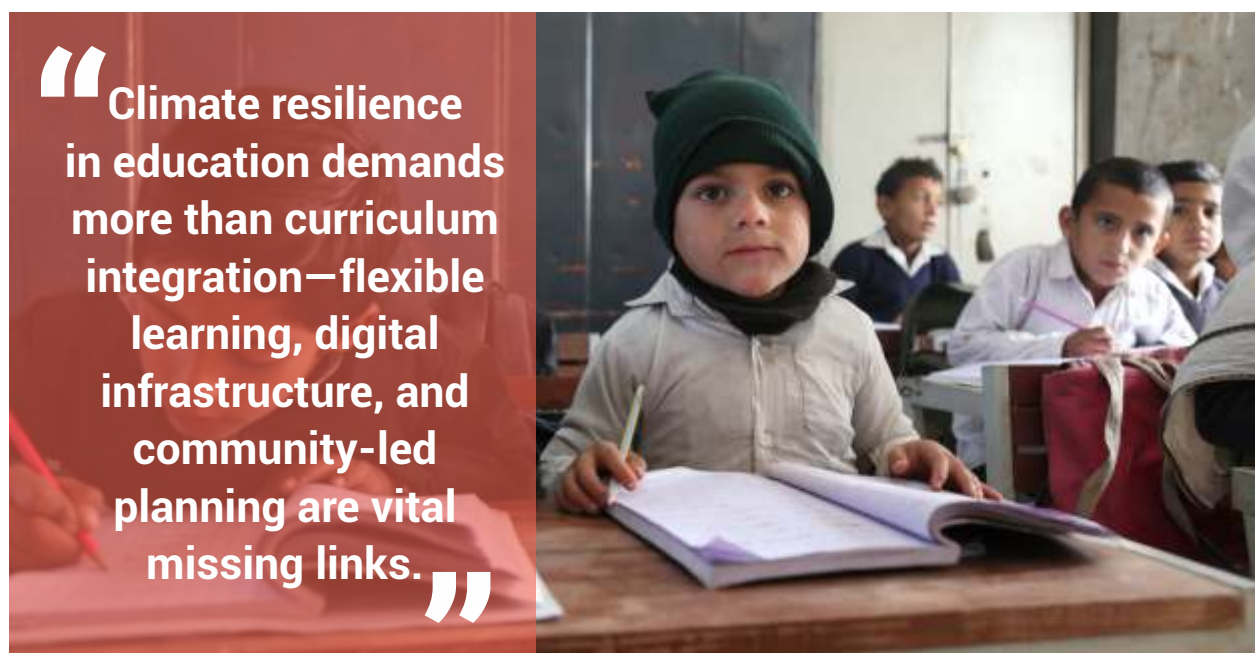
Sindh's education sector plan reflects a recognition of climate resilience as vital for sustained learning opportunities. The province emphasises the need to assess and address climate risks in school locations. For instance, schools situated in flood-prone areas are considered when planning new school sites. Sindh's proposed approach also involves incorporating disaster risk reduction education into the curriculum, empowering students to contribute to disaster preparedness and response efforts.

### 3.3 Comparison of Resilience in the Provincial Education Sector Plans

In comparing the climate resilience approaches of these provinces, several patterns emerge. First, all provinces recognize the importance of climate resilience in the education sector, highlighting the widespread awareness of the issue. Second, there is a consistent emphasis on integrating climate education into the curriculum, empowering students to become agents of change in their communities. Third, the focus on disaster-resilient infrastructure for the safety of students and educators is cited as an important intervention strategy in all the sector plans.

However, a holistic take on climate resilience in education is missing across the board. For instance, mere integration of climate education into the curriculum is not enough. The curriculum and learning modalities also need to be made flexible to adapt to emergency circumstances. Similarly, digital infrastructure for both students and teachers is critical to ensuring the continuity of education during crises. This point is entirely missing across all the sector plans. Strong community-led planning, partnerships with relevant governmental and non-governmental entities such as the Ministry of Climate Change, arrangements for psycho-social support within the education system and early warning and preparedness systems are other missing links.

Finally, resilience in education needs to be viewed more holistically rather than focusing on climate resilience alone. Conflict, pandemics and other plausible emergencies should be accounted for to ensure that the sector plans truly strive for a shock-resilient education system in Pakistan.



# 4. MEASURES FOR GREATER INCLUSION IN PAKISTAN'S EDUCATION SECTOR PLANS

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## 4.1 Understanding Inclusive Education and Its Importance

Inclusive education is a pedagogical philosophy and practice that recognizes the diverse learning needs of all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or characteristics. It promotes the idea that every student has the right to quality education in a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Inclusive education emphasises the principles of equity and access, diversity and inclusion, quality education, social cohesion, and human rights. It aligns with international human rights principles, particularly the right to education. Additionally, inclusive education has been shown to improve educational outcomes for all students, leading to higher academic achievements, better social skills, and increased future opportunities. It also has immense economic benefits as it prepares students for active participation in the workforce, potentially resulting in long-term economic benefits for individuals and society.

## 4.2 Province-wise Breakdown of Inclusion in the Education Sector Plans

### Balochistan

Based on the priorities identified in its education sector plan, the province has developed an Inclusive Education Policy that emphasises the importance of creating inclusive learning environments for all students. The plan also supports the creation of special education centres that provide tailored support and education to students with disabilities. Teacher training on inclusive teaching methods to create classrooms that accommodate diverse learning needs is also emphasised in the education sector plan. Unlike other provinces, Balochistan's education sector plan factors in the importance of community involvement in promoting inclusive education and challenging stereotypes.

### Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

In line with the expectations outlined in the education sector plan, like Balochistan, KP, too has developed an Inclusive Education Policy that outlines the province's commitment to providing inclusive education for students with disabilities and diverse learning needs. Establishing inclusive classrooms in regular schools is also an aspiration that KP shares with the other provinces. Special resource centres for students with disabilities, offering specialized support, assistive devices, and educational materials are also stated as steps towards the inclusion of children with special needs. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's education sector plan also prioritizes teacher training in inclusive teaching methodologies to ensure that classrooms are welcoming and supportive for all students. It also speaks about working on creating accessible school infrastructure, including ramps and toilets, to accommodate students with disabilities.

### Punjab

Punjab's education sector plan provides several provisions for the promotion of inclusive education. These include the establishment of inclusive classrooms in regular schools, the operation of special education centres for children with disabilities, teacher training in inclusive teaching methodologies, and the creation of accessible school infrastructure.

## Sindh

Sindh's education sector plan also pledges efforts to promote inclusive education and cater to the needs of students with disabilities. The province aims to establish inclusive schools where children with disabilities can access education in a mainstream setting, promoting a sense of belonging and reducing segregation. Sindh also aspires to create resource centres for students with disabilities, offering specialized support, assistive devices, and educational materials.

Similar to Punjab, Sindh focuses on training teachers to create inclusive classrooms and provide individualized support to students with disabilities.

### 4.3 Comparison of Inclusion in the Provincial Education Sector Plans

In comparing the inclusive education practices and special needs programs in these provinces, several key trends surface. All four provinces have formulated inclusive education policies that emphasise the importance of providing quality education to all students, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities.

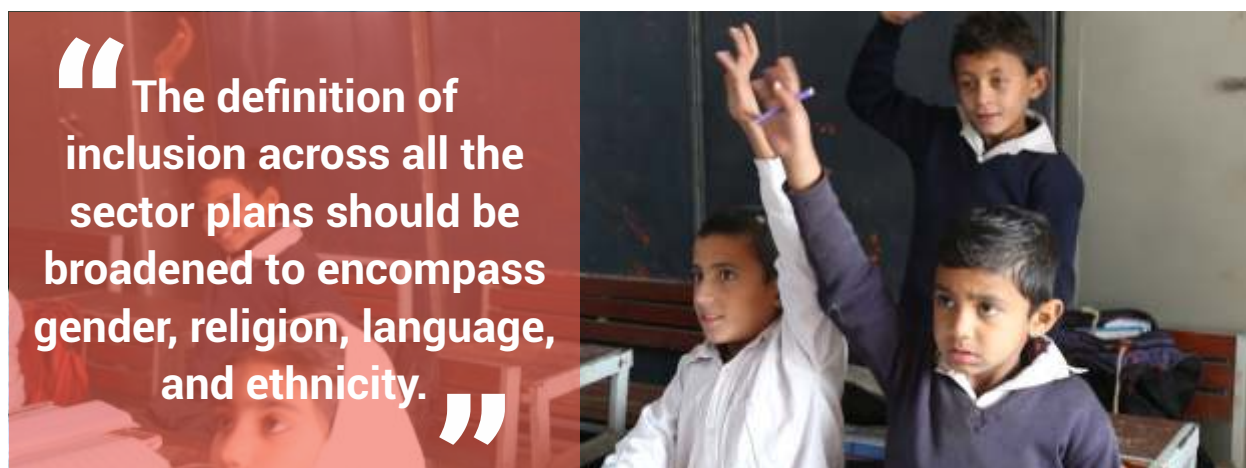
Establishing inclusive classrooms in mainstream schools is also a common goal across provinces. Similarly, special education centres exist in all provinces, offering specialized support and resources to students with disabilities.

The mention of teacher training in inclusive methodologies and the need to create accessible school infrastructure are consistent features across all provincial sector plans to create inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Community involvement in promoting inclusive education is specifically emphasised in Balochistan and KP, recognizing the importance of local support and understanding.

While the education sector plans in Pakistan show positive developments, they share common gaps in the planning and implementation of a genuinely inclusive system. These gaps include the need for more detailed strategies to overcome physical and social barriers, broader specialized support for students with disabilities, increased involvement of parents and communities, and initiatives to raise awareness and reduce the stigma associated with both disability and diversity. Notably, comprehensive data collection and monitoring mechanisms are lacking, hindering the assessment of effectiveness and the identification of challenges.

Most significantly, all the provincial education sector plans narrowly define "inclusion," focusing primarily on students with disabilities. This limited approach entirely neglects other aspects critical to inclusion such as gender, religion, language, and ethnicity. Owing to this glaring oversight, none of the sector plans can be deemed truly inclusive. A diametrical shift in approaching the question of inclusion is required at the policy planning level to ensure that all the dimensions of inclusion are acknowledged and addressed in the education sector.



# 5. EDUCATION SECTOR FINANCING AND ITS LINK TO KEY ASPECTS

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## 5.1 Overview of Education Sector Financing in Pakistan

Education financing in Pakistan largely depends on both federal and provincial budgets. The federal government allocates funds for education, while provinces also have their education budget. It is also important to point out here that education falls primarily under the purview of provinces due to the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan. This has led to variations in budgetary allocations and policies among provinces.

Education budgets are typically divided into development and recurrent expenditures. Development budgets fund infrastructure projects and capacity-building initiatives, while recurrent budgets cover routine expenses such as salaries and operational costs.

The next section of this chapter will explore how education sector financing is correlated with key aspects like gender-responsive, resilient and inclusive education, and addresses the issue of OOSC across the provinces.

## 5.2 Public Investment in Gender-responsive, Resilient and Inclusive Education

Pakistan's education system is chronically underfunded, with a persistent gap between budgetary allocations and the actual needs of the sector. According to data from the World Bank, Pakistan allocated just 2.4% of its GDP to education in 2020, falling far below the recommended international benchmark of 4-6% of GDP.

Pakistan's inability to allocate sufficient funds for providing quality education to its population has not only hampered the country's progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) but also perpetuated regional, and gender disparities. As demonstrated during the 2022 floods, it has also left the education system ill-prepared for climate change impacts.

### Gender-Responsive Education

Gender disparities in access to education persist, with girls facing multiple barriers, including cultural norms, lack of infrastructure, and safety concerns. Yet, the budgetary commitment to addressing these issues remains inadequate.

In the 2021-22 budget announcements, Punjab dedicated a mere 1.07% of its education budget to initiatives aimed at enhancing girls' access to formal education, while Sindh allocated a slightly higher, 2.64%. Conversely, the federal government and Balochistan failed to designate any specific schemes for this purpose, a particularly concerning oversight given Balochistan's alarmingly high number of out-of-school girls, especially at the secondary level. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa allocated 70% of the education development budget at the secondary level to improve girls' access to education. However, the lack of

clarity in budgetary documents regarding the exact amount allocated for this purpose raises questions about the effectiveness of this commitment.

The lack of gender-responsive education financing is also reflected in the limited resources allocated to specific schemes. For example, the stipends provided to girls to encourage school attendance, as mentioned earlier, are often insufficient and not consistently distributed. Data from the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) reveals that a substantial number of eligible girls have not collected their stipends, despite disbursement, highlighting the implementation challenges and inadequacy of financial incentives.

## Resilient Education

Climate change poses a significant threat to education in Pakistan, while the spectre of disease outbreak (i.e., an epidemic or pandemic) and conflict are also very fresh in the country's historical context. Yet, the country's education financing does not adequately address the need for a resilient education system.

This can be illustrated by the fact that during Fiscal Year 2021-22, except for Islamabad Capital Territory and KP, where 5.2% and 2.47% of the education budgets, respectively, were allocated for the upkeep and improvement of educational infrastructure, no other regional government set aside funds for this purpose. This is particularly concerning, given the example of the pandemic, which underscores the urgent need for schools to be equipped with essential amenities like clean water, sanitation facilities, and hand-washing stations to protect children from contagious ailments. This is also important given the country's vulnerability to climate-related disasters such as floods.

The absence of infrastructure investment in Sindh is especially problematic, as the province faces the highest number of school buildings in need of repair, the greatest number of unsafe school structures, and the highest count of schools lacking basic facilities.

REGION	BUILDINGS NEEDING REPAIR	DANGEROUS BUILDINGS	SCHOOLS WITHOUT A BUILDING	SCHOOLS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY	SCHOOLS WITHOUT DRINKING WATER	SCHOOLS WITHOUT TOILET	NON-FUNCTIONALS SCHOOLS	CLOSED SCHOOLS
<b>Sindh</b>	16,500	6,735	4,908	23,185	17,993	15,450	1,500	1,722
<b>Punjab</b>	15,934	1,738	63	1,463	187	152	0	0
<b>KP</b>	8,796	1,618	1,162	9,919	7,652	4,850	471	127
<b>Balochistan</b>	6,929	2,598	1,955	11,219	11,662	8,707	2,843	0
<b>AJK</b>	0	0	1,299	3,656	3,230	2,741	0	0
<b>GB</b>	862	0	34	695	460	456	0	0
<b>ICT</b>	204	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,225</b>	<b>12,699</b>	<b>9,421</b>	<b>50,137</b>	<b>41,184</b>	<b>32,356</b>	<b>4,814</b>	<b>1,849</b>

Table 1: School Infrastructure in Pakistan



Investment in resilient education is crucial for building infrastructure that can withstand shocks, ensuring that children can continue their education even in challenging circumstances. However, Pakistan's budgetary allocations do not reflect this urgency at all.

### **Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education is another aspect where Pakistan's education financing falls short. The country struggles to provide adequate support for students with disabilities and those from marginalized backgrounds. As cited in all the sector plans, the lack of accessible infrastructure, specialized teachers, and appropriate learning materials hampers the inclusion of these students in mainstream education.

Inclusive education financing is critical to address these gaps. However, resources for special education centres and inclusive classrooms remain insufficient. A study conducted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) highlighted that many special education institutions in Pakistan face resource constraints, leading to subpar learning conditions for children with disabilities.

Pakistan's education financing paints a concerning picture of an underfunded sector grappling with persistent gender disparities, inadequate support for inclusive education, and vulnerability to climate change impacts. The government's commitment to education, as reflected in budget allocations, remains far from adequate to meet the sector's needs.



**“ Pakistan's education sector faces challenges of underfunding, gender disparities, and climate vulnerability. The government's budget allocations fall short, hindering the sector's ability to expand and effectively sustain itself. ”**

# 6. CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS: INTERPLAY OF KEY ASPECTS

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This cross-sectional analysis examines the intricate interplay between gender responsiveness, resilience and inclusion in Pakistan's education sector. It explores how these key aspects are interconnected and the challenges faced in balancing multiple priorities within the country's diverse educational landscape. This analysis sheds light on how gender responsiveness, resilience and inclusion, and the effort to reduce the number of OOSC are interconnected and how policymakers navigate the complexities of balancing these priorities.

## 6.1 Interconnections Between Key Aspects

Given Pakistan's historical vulnerability to natural disasters and its current status as being among the top ten countries impacted by climate change, resilience in education should perhaps be seen as a leading priority. This is important not merely on its own but also to sustain progress in terms of ensuring a system that is gender-responsive, inclusive and caters to the diverse needs of underserved children to encourage greater access. A resilient education system provides infrastructure that can withstand climate-related challenges, such as floods or earthquakes and invests in disaster preparedness to minimize disruption to education during all types of emergencies. This, in turn, supports inclusive education by providing safe learning environments for all. A resilient education system also supports efforts to reduce the number of OOSC as it focuses on providing access to education during and after emergencies, ensuring educational continuity despite shock-induced disruptions. A resilient approach to education also involves educating communities and school administrators about climate change and general disaster preparedness, which in turn enables communities to respond more swiftly to meet the educational needs of children during times of crisis.

A resilient education system also integrates environmental education, raising awareness about climate change and promoting responsible behaviour. This aligns with gender-responsive education, as girls often play critical roles in natural resource management in rural areas.

For Pakistan to overcome the huge challenge of OOSC, it must adopt a multi-pronged approach to close the gender gap in access and participation. This directly complements the achievement of inclusivity in education by addressing barriers faced by girls, transgender students and those children who, in addition to their gender status may further be limited in terms of accessing education because they live with a disability. Gender-responsiveness in education also means the introduction of a curriculum that challenges stereotypes and biases, thereby celebrating diversity and promoting inclusive educational environments.

Inclusivity efforts, such as accessible infrastructure and teacher training, directly benefit children with disabilities. Given that merely 4% of the children living with various forms of disabilities in Pakistan have access to formal education, these measures significantly contribute to reducing the number of OOSC by removing barriers to enrolment and participation. Programs designed to address OOSC often focus on reaching marginalized and underserved communities. These efforts align with inclusive education practices, aiming to create equitable learning environments.

# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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## 1. Integrated Approach for Sustainable Education Planning

### National Education Policy Implementation

Ensure that the National Education Policy is effectively implemented across all provinces, creating a unified vision for education in Pakistan. This includes integrating the policy's principles of inclusivity, gender responsiveness, and resilience into provincial education plans.

### Education Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Develop and implement robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education. This includes assessing teacher performance, student learning outcomes, and the implementation of inclusive and gender-responsive practices.

### Holistic Curriculum Development

Develop curricula that reflect inclusive and gender-responsive content and promote environmental education and resilience. Encourage the use of innovative teaching methods that cater to diverse learning needs.

### Teacher Training

Prioritize teacher training in inclusive education practices, resilient education, and gender sensitivity. Invest in professional development opportunities for educators to ensure they can create inclusive, equitable, and quality learning environments.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Establish a comprehensive data collection and analysis system to monitor and evaluate progress in key areas such as gender responsiveness, inclusivity, resilience, and addressing OOSC. Ensure data is disaggregated by gender, disability, and other relevant factors to identify disparities.

## 2. Strengthening Collaboration Between Provinces

### Inter-provincial Working Groups

Create inter-provincial working groups or forums to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among provinces. These platforms can serve as spaces for sharing best practices, lessons learned, and successful initiatives.

### Resource Pooling

Explore opportunities for resource sharing among provinces, particularly for capacity-building initiatives, teacher training programs, and the development of inclusive and resilient educational materials.

#### **Standardized Monitoring and Reporting**

Develop standardized monitoring and reporting mechanisms that allow for cross-provincial comparisons and benchmarking. This can help identify areas where specific provinces excel and where support is needed.

#### **Joint Advocacy**

Provinces should collaborate on advocacy efforts to secure increased funding for education at the federal level and from international donors.

#### **Exchange Programs**

Facilitate teacher and student exchange programs among provinces to promote cultural diversity, tolerance, and a broader perspective on education.

### **3. Advocacy for Targeted Financing for Key Aspects**

#### **Budget Allocation for Key Priorities**

Advocate for budget allocations that specifically target key aspects such as resilience, gender responsiveness, inclusivity, and addressing out-of-school children. Prioritize these areas to ensure adequate funding.

#### **Conditional Funding**

Introduce conditional funding mechanisms that tie a portion of education funding to achieving specific goals related to resilience, gender equity, and inclusivity. This encourages provinces to focus on these priorities.

#### **Transparency and Accountability**

Ensure transparency in budgetary allocations and spending related to education. Implement robust accountability mechanisms to track the utilization of funds for key aspects and hold stakeholders accountable for results.

#### **Advocacy and Awareness**

Conduct advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of resilience, gender-responsive education, inclusivity, and addressing out-of-school children. Engage civil society, media, and communities to build support for these priorities.

#### **International Assistance**

Collaborate with international donors and organizations to access funding and technical assistance for projects related to resilience, gender responsiveness, inclusivity, and addressing out-of-school children.

# 8. CONCLUSION

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This report conducts an in-depth analysis of the education sector plans in Pakistan's four major provinces: Punjab, Sindh, KP, and Balochistan. The primary focus of this analysis was to assess the provisions for gender-responsive, resilient and inclusive education within Pakistan's educational planning.

The findings reveal a shared set of challenges and mitigation strategies among the provinces, encompassing disparities in access, quality, and governance.

When evaluating resilience strategies of the provinces, there is unanimous recognition of the significance of climate resilience in education. All the provinces also emphasise the integration of climate education into the curriculum, empowering students to become agents of change. Disaster-resilient infrastructure is also identified as a critical intervention strategy. However, a comprehensive approach to resilience is notably absent and other types of emergencies such as pandemics, epidemics and conflict have not been accounted for. Similarly, integrating climate education into the curriculum only covers one aspect of the problem. The other aspect demands the introduction of flexibility in learning methods to adapt to various potential emergencies. Furthermore, the oversight of digital infrastructure for teachers and students during crisis is a significant gap. There is also a notable absence of community-led planning, partnerships with relevant entities, psycho-social support, and early warning systems within the sector plans, indicating a significant need for improvement in these areas.

The education sector plans of all the provinces acknowledge the gender gap that persists in their respective provinces at varying levels. The plans, accordingly, pledge to integrate gender considerations into education policies, including the provision of safe facilities, the recruitment of female teachers, and the development of gender-sensitive curricula. However, there are substantial discrepancies in the implementation of these policies. Provinces also lack gender-disaggregated education data to inform their planning and decision-making processes. Additionally, except KP, none of the provinces have established gender-responsive education budgets, making it challenging to assess the integration of gender considerations in the planning and implementation phases. While education stipends for girls are a common strategy to encourage greater enrolment and retention, effective monitoring mechanisms are lacking in the sector planning. This is especially critical given that data from Sindh suggests that over 50% of eligible recipients of education stipends have not claimed their funds. It is imperative that the provinces establish gender-specific performance indicators, integrate gender-responsive planning, prioritize the safety of female students, and establish time-bound goals for infrastructure improvement.

Inclusive education for students with disabilities is another shared aspiration across all provinces. The provincial sector plans aim to create inclusive classrooms within mainstream schools and establish special education centres for students with disabilities. Furthermore, teacher training in inclusive methodologies and accessible infrastructure is a common priority within the provincial sector plans. Nevertheless, the definition of inclusion predominantly revolves only around disabilities, overlooking other vital dimensions like gender, religion, language, and ethnicity. This renders the sector plans incomplete in reflecting a truly inclusive approach.

In light of this analysis, it is recommended that Pakistan adopt an integrated approach to enhance education sector planning. This approach should primarily focus on the effective implementation of the National Education Policy, ensuring the integration of inclusivity, gender responsiveness, and resilience into provincial education plans. To achieve this, the provision of teacher training in gender-responsive, resilient and inclusive education is of paramount importance. Additionally, the urgent need for a comprehensive data collection system, disaggregated by gender and disability status, is direly needed to monitor the progress effectively.

Enhancing collaboration between provinces can significantly expedite the achievement of these goals. It will enable provinces to actively learn from each other's best practices and regularly exchange knowledge and expertise on critical issues.

In their efforts to enhance future education sector plans in Pakistan, all the provinces must comprehensively address the needs of all genders, broaden their approach to inclusive education, and factor in all dimensions that will make education in Pakistan truly shock-resilient.

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