

HARVESTING
HOPEFrom Margins to Mainstream
Centering Girls in the Education EmergencyEDUCATION
EMERGENCY
IN NUMBERS!

13.7

Million Girls are
Out of Schools¹

19.4

Girls are Married
before 18²

A SILENT CRISIS!

While Pakistan's education emergency is quantified in numbers, girls lived realities remain dangerously invisible.



“

I just got my period and knew nothing about it. I was at school, scared and ashamed. Didn't even know who to talk to. My classmates, often bullied me, so I couldn't ask them either out of fear.

“

Sometimes, my school bus changes route and drops me far from home. To avoid troubling my family for pickup, I walk a long way back, which makes me feel unsafe and tired. I feel unmotivated to go to school after.

“

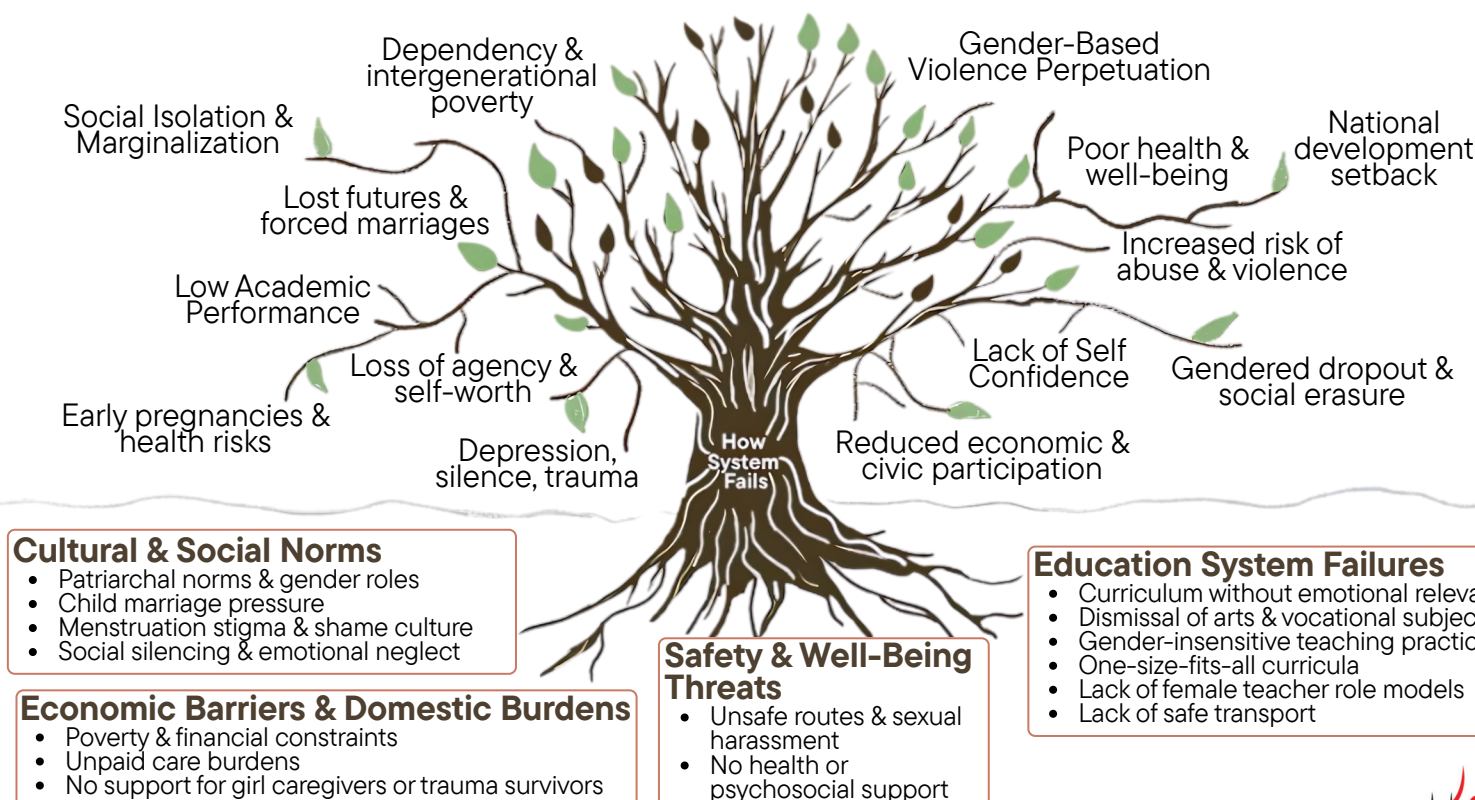
I have anemia, which makes me weak and sick with headaches and body pain. Because of this, I can't study well. On top of that, my mother is unwell, so I have to manage all household chores.

“

I was weak in studies, so my father dropped me out of school. He never motivated me to study.

FROM ROOTS TO RUIN: HOW THE SYSTEM FAILS GIRLS

Girls are systematically denied safe, equitable, and emotionally supportive education!



SOURCES:

1. Pakistan Education Statistics (2022–23), Pakistan Institute of Education, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training
2. Child Marriage Country Profiles, UNICEF Data Portal (Accessed May 2025)

NOTE: Primary insights were gathered through author-led participatory engagements with adolescent girls both in-schools and out-of-schools as part of her Malala Fund Girl Programme Fellowship project, *Harvesting Hope*

HARVESTING
HOPE**From Margins to Mainstream**
Centering Girls in the Education Emergency**POLICY DEMANDS**

- **Operationalize the Education Emergency with a Gender Justice Agenda**, with earmarked budgets, defined timelines, and measurable indicators focused on girls' emotional safety, inclusion, and sustained retention.
- **Legislate and strictly enforce a Nationwide Ban On Child Marriage** by establishing a uniform legal age of 18 across all provinces, with clear penalties and robust protection mechanisms for at-risk girls.
- **Mainstream Social Emotional Learning (SEL)** into formal and non-formal education curricula from early levels to foster emotional resilience, critical thinking, and gender responsive thinking.
- **Ensure Gender-Responsive Financing** by allocating transparent, ring-fenced budgets for girls' education, reproductive health, and psychosocial support. Prioritize human-centered investments over infrastructure-heavy solutions.
- **Engage Boys and Men as Feminist Allies** by institutionalizing community-based gender-transformative programs that promote allyship, raise awareness, and shift harmful norms, to disrupt harmful masculinities and foster enabling environments for girls' education.
- **Deploy Targeted Incentives for Marginalized Girls**, provide meals, sanitary products, transport, uniforms, and scholarships to boost school retention and progression in high-risk areas.
- Mandate **Gender-sensitive, Trauma-informed Teacher Training** through regular, compulsory professional development to create safe, inclusive, and supportive classrooms for girls.
- Where co-education impedes access, **Invest in Gender-segregated Institutions, Safe Subsidized Transport, Proper Sanitation, Harassment Monitoring**, and strong grievance redressal systems to cultivate safer institutions and build parental trust in the system.
- Institutionalize regular, evidence-informed **Sensitization Sessions for Policymakers that Centre Girls' Lived Realities** - often invisible from formal planning - to ground policies in real experiences, not assumptions.
- **Shift from Rote Learning to Skill-Building** by reforming outdated curricula to focus on life skills, critical thinking, digital literacy, reproductive health, and creativity, aligning with girls' aspirations of education that cultivates agency and enables them to survive and lead, not memorize and submit.
- **Develop Curriculum in Consultation** with education experts, mental health professionals, gender specialists, students, parents, and teachers, not just traditional elites, to reflect the contemporary needs.
- **Involve Religious Scholars, Tribal Elders, and Local Influencers** as girls' education advocates, framing it as a faith-aligned, social, and moral imperative.
- **Support and institutionalize girl-led initiatives and fellowships** by establishing funded programs and platforms that position girls as policy influencers, not mere beneficiaries, formalizing youth participation within governance structures.

“

I was forced into marriage without my consent. Now my in-laws want me to drop out. I want to study and be with my friends. At the very least, I want to complete college. I'm very worried.

”

“

My father is a carpenter. He is very sick now, so can't work or find a job. We are struggling financially, and I try to contribute through giving tuition, but still, it's not enough. My family wants me to drop out to reduce the financial burden.

”

“

Teachers are like Hitlers! Sometimes, they are very harsh, which makes me lose motivation to study. They give piles of tests and don't understand that we have responsibilities at home.

”