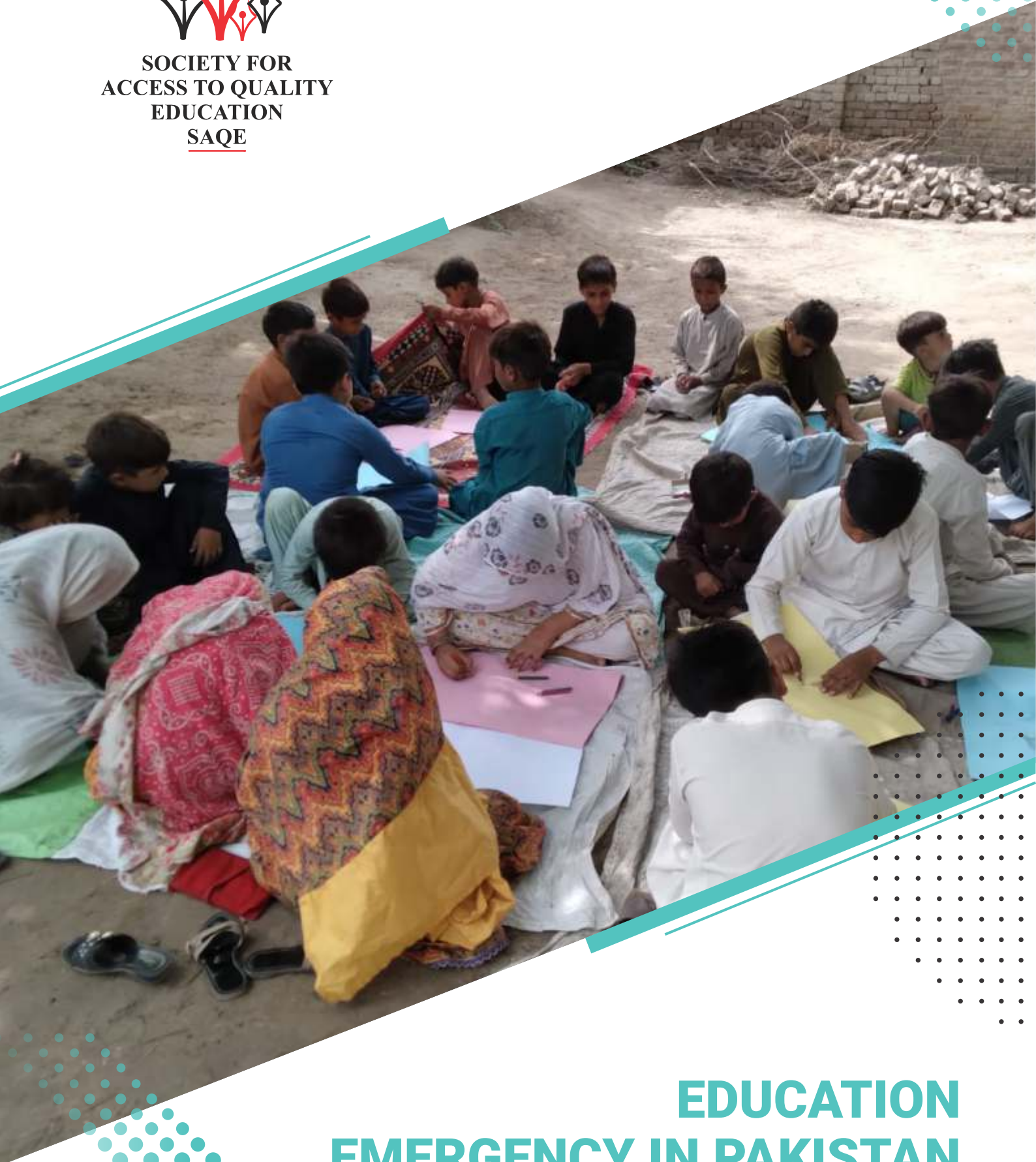




**SOCIETY FOR  
ACCESS TO QUALITY  
EDUCATION  
SAQE**



# **EDUCATION EMERGENCY IN PAKISTAN AN URGENT CALL TO ACTIONS**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Society for Access to Quality Education (SAQE) and the Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to the author of this publication, Moiz Hussain, for his hard work and dedication to this important paper. This white paper explores three critical and interconnected issues in education: Gender Transformative Education, Equitable Education Financing, and Education Resilience, through an analysis of secondary data. These themes are essential to understanding the current challenges, initiatives, and the way forward to improving Pakistan's education system, particularly in light of the Education Emergency announced by the Prime Minister of Pakistan in early 2024.

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PCE, an initiative of SAQE for Access to Quality Education, was established in 2005 as a network of civil society representatives committed to ensuring access to quality education. Since its inception, PCE has expanded its network to over 200 members across more than 1,500 Union Councils in Pakistan.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pakistan is currently facing a severe education crisis, underscored by a staggering statistic: over 26 million children are out of school, the highest number in the world. This figure represents a blatant violation of the constitutional obligation under Article 25-A, which guarantees the right to free and quality education for all children. The crisis highlights deep-seated systemic issues within the education sector, further compounded by the country's persistent political and economic instability.

Regions like Sindh and Balochistan are especially susceptible to systemic educational failures, where enrolment rates are alarmingly low and educational outcomes are severely compromised. These provinces consistently lag behind in key educational indicators, reflecting the deep-rooted challenges that have been exacerbated by decades of neglect. As a result, Pakistan is significantly off track in meeting its international commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable, quality education for all. The Education Emergency as declared by the Prime Minister of Pakistan requires targeted interventions in the underdeveloped areas of the country to address the widening gaps in educational access and quality.

This document addresses the education crisis in Pakistan by focusing on three interconnected themes: Gender Transformative Education, Equitable Education Financing, and Education Resilience. These themes are crucial for understanding the multifaceted nature of the challenges facing Pakistan's education system and for developing effective strategies to overcome them.

Gender Transformative Education is identified as a vital approach that seeks to integrate gender perspectives across all aspects of the education system. This approach challenges entrenched gender norms and inequalities, aiming to create a more inclusive learning environment where both boys and girls can thrive. However, despite some progress, gender biases remain deeply ingrained, particularly in rural areas. Initiatives such as the girls' stipend programmes have yielded positive results in increasing girls' enrolment, but these efforts are disconnected from other structural changes that are required for long-term change. To truly transform the education system, a comprehensive overhaul is required. This involves integrating gender sensitivity into teacher training, curricula, and resource allocation, and dismantling the socio-cultural barriers that continue to hinder girls' education.

Equitable Education Financing is another critical area that demands urgent attention. In Pakistan, the distribution of educational resources is heavily skewed, with significant disparities between affluent and impoverished regions. The country's education sector has long suffered from low public expenditure, inefficient resource allocation, and a heavy reliance on inconsistent donor funding. These issues have resulted in inadequate educational resources for the poorest children, further entrenching socio-economic inequalities. To address these challenges, it is not only important to increase public investment in education but to also ensure that it is equitably allocated to uplift the most marginalised in the country. Additionally, leveraging public-private partnerships could mobilise additional resources to provide quality education to the poorest of the poor in the country.

The resilience of Pakistan's education system is also a major concern, particularly in light of the frequent natural disasters that the country faces, such as the devastating floods of 2022. These disasters have repeatedly disrupted the education of millions of children, highlighting the urgent need for a more resilient infrastructure. The current lack of preparedness and resilient infrastructure exacerbates the challenges of providing continuous education, particularly in marginalised communities where the impact is most severe. Girls, in particular, are disproportionately affected by these disruptions, facing higher risks of dropping out due to socio-cultural barriers and safety concerns during emergencies. To enhance the resilience of the education system, it is crucial to invest in disaster-resistant infrastructure, develop robust remote learning strategies, and integrate psychosocial support mechanisms that address the mental health needs of students. These measures will help to create an education system that can withstand future shocks and ensure that all children, regardless of their circumstances, have access to continuous, quality education.

# INTRODUCTION

Pakistan stands at the cusp of yet another Education Emergency, a crisis marked by staggering statistics and systemic challenges that require immediate and sustained attention. With over 26 million children out of school—the highest number in the world—Pakistan's future generations are being deprived of their fundamental right to education. This white paper seeks to address the critical issues underpinning this emergency, proposing comprehensive strategies to not only improve access to education but also enhance its quality and resilience amidst political and economic instability that has gripped the country, especially in the last 5 years.

According to the Pakistan Education Statistic 2021-22 report, around 39% of school-going age children are out of school. In absolute numbers, 26.2 million children are not enrolled in any educational institution, a figure that ranks the highest in the world. The ones who are enrolled are also at a disadvantage as they also receive meagre quality in the public schools around the country. The various data on foundational learning in Pakistan and internationally suggests that 27% of students in Pakistan are able to achieve minimum proficiency level in mathematics by the end of primary schools (TIMSS, 2019) and 77% children at late primary level lack proficiency in reading (World Bank, 2019). These figures underscore the profound challenges facing Pakistan's education system and its inability to equip children with the skills necessary for a prosperous economic future.

The current political and economic turmoil in Pakistan further exacerbates the education crisis. Education reforms often take a back seat amidst shifting political priorities and economic instability. However, it is crucial to recognize that sustainable economic reforms are inextricably linked to improvements in the education sector. Investing in education should not just be seen as a basic human right, but also as a strategic economic imperative for a country like Pakistan that has a youth bulge that needs to be the foundation for the overall economic growth.

The disparities in educational outcomes are particularly stark in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan. These regions consistently rank the lowest in key education indicators, necessitating urgent intervention. In Sindh, for example, only 48% of children aged 5-16 years are enrolled in schools. In Balochistan, the situation is even more dire, with an enrollment rate of just 41%.<sup>1</sup> Addressing these regional disparities requires not only increased resources but also a strong political will to implement targeted reforms.

While infrastructure development is essential, the focus must shift towards improving the quality of education. This entails ensuring that teachers are adequately trained, curricula are relevant and engaging, and educational outcomes are rigorously monitored. In Pakistan, much of the reforms in the past have focused mostly on the physical infrastructure. However, many of the provinces and the federal ministry of education have rightly identified a lack of quality as the main issue that fundamentally also hampers the enrolment figures and encourages dropouts in schools.

It is imperative to note that quality education when discussed is only limited to the above variables such as teachers' training and performance, curriculum and pedagogy. The three other variables that are not much part of the discourse are Gender Transformative Education, Equitable Financing, and Education Resilience. Focusing on these three fundamentally provides an equity lens to focus more on the girls and the poor and marginalised population, as they deserve more attention and resources to come at par with the general population and to compete with their counterparts studying in private schools.

This paper will elaborate on these three major topics, aiming to provide a definition that is context-specific for Pakistan, assess the current state of their implementation nationwide, and offer recommendations for the federal and provincial governments to incorporate into their ongoing educational policy reforms.

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<sup>1</sup> Pakistan Institute of Education. (2022). Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22: Highlights. Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training. <https://pie.gov.pk/SiteImage/Downloads/PES%20Highlights%202021-22%20New.pdf>

For this paper we define the three as follows:

**Gender Transformative Education** is an approach that integrates gender perspectives into all aspects of the education system. It aims to transform deeply entrenched gender norms, power dynamics, and inequalities through comprehensive changes in policy, systems of service delivery, pedagogy, community engagement, and school environments.

**Equitable financing for education** in Pakistan involves the strategic allocation of financial resources aimed at ensuring all students, particularly those in the most socio-economically disadvantaged and underdeveloped districts, have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities. This approach prioritises funding based on need, addressing disparities, and promoting inclusivity to achieve educational equity.

**Education resilience** refers to the capacity of education systems, schools, educators, and students to adapt, recover, and thrive in the face of disruptions, challenges, and adversities. This includes natural disasters, economic crises, pandemics, and other unexpected events that can impact the educational process. Resilience in education emphasises the ability to maintain and restore educational functions, support students' learning and well-being, and innovate in response to changing conditions.

The implementation of Gender Transformative Education is essential in dismantling gender biases and creating an inclusive learning environment that benefits all students - both boys and girls. This, however, cannot be achieved through sporadic initiatives and programmes but requires a holistic change in how the issues are perceived and understood and each function of the service delivery is conscious of the inherent bias towards gender in its function. We have seen initiatives achieving successes such as the Benazir Income Support Programmes' *Waseela-e-Taleem* stipends to girls that have increased the enrolment of girls in schools. However, the evaluation reports of the programmes indicate that while there has been some improvement in girls' attendance, the impact has been minimal. Additionally, the effect on reducing dropout rates among girls has been statistically insignificant<sup>2</sup> (OPM, 2016).

Similarly, improving school sanitation, ensuring functional toilets and running waters, all contribute positively to school enrolments and retention of girls in schools. But these are sporadic, and half-baked changes that may yield immediate results but do not guarantee sustainable changes to the enrolment and the retention problem that has gripped the country.

Gender Transformative Education necessitates a comprehensive overhaul of all aspects of education delivery. This includes incorporating gender sensitivity into teacher training and pedagogy to ensure unbiased teaching. It also involves equitable resource allocation for schools, particularly for girls who have historically been under-resourced due to systemic gender bias. Additionally, it requires removing gender biases from curricula and textbooks and encouraging all vocations and disciplines equally across all genders.

Equitable Financing ensures that educational resources are distributed based on need, targeting underserved regions to reduce disparities and promote fairness. In Pakistan, regional inequalities in educational access and quality are pronounced among geographies, among economic classes and among genders.

Rwanda's equitable financing model can serve as an example for Pakistan to pay attention to. The increase in budget, being 15.6% of the total outlay for the country, it has been able to achieve 98.9% of total enrolment at the primary levels. The teacher to student ratio improved from 66:1 in 2017 to 44:1 by 2021 and the salary of the teachers has been increased up to 88% to increase their motivation and interest.<sup>3</sup>

Increased investment in education reflects the country's broader political commitment to enhancing its education system. To effectively address the nation's persistent economic challenges in the long term, the political elite of the country will have to prioritise investment in education.

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<sup>2</sup> Benazir Income Support Programme Evaluation of the Waseela-e-Taleem Conditional Cash Transfer – Oxford Policy Management Management (2016)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/media/5346/file/UNICEF%20Rwanda.pdf>

Education Resilience involves creating an education system that can adapt to and withstand various shocks, such as political instability, economic crises, and natural disasters. This is particularly relevant for Pakistan, where such disruptions are frequent. Nepal's approach to education resilience offers valuable lessons. Following the 2015 earthquake, Nepal implemented several ER measures, including disaster-resilient infrastructure. In a remarkable success story, Nepal has rebuilt over 7,000 schools damaged by the 2015 earthquake, significantly enhancing their disaster preparedness. The reconstruction efforts, which began in 2017, involved various approaches, including government funding, partnerships with NGOs, and international aid. These new schools, primarily in the most affected districts, were constructed to higher standards, incorporating earthquake-resistant designs. The teachers training to conduct online teaching significantly helped in the continuation of schooling during the pandemic and ensured student retention rates during emergencies. Additionally, the schools are equipped with emergency preparedness plans and regular safety drills, ensuring that both students and staff are better prepared for future disasters. This holistic approach ensures a safer and more resilient educational environment.<sup>4</sup>

Given Pakistan's history of recurring natural disasters and man-made challenges, the country needs an education system that remains resilient in the face of frequent disruptions. These disruptions often lead to significant consequences, such as high student dropout rates and poor learning outcomes.



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<sup>4</sup><https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/33144>



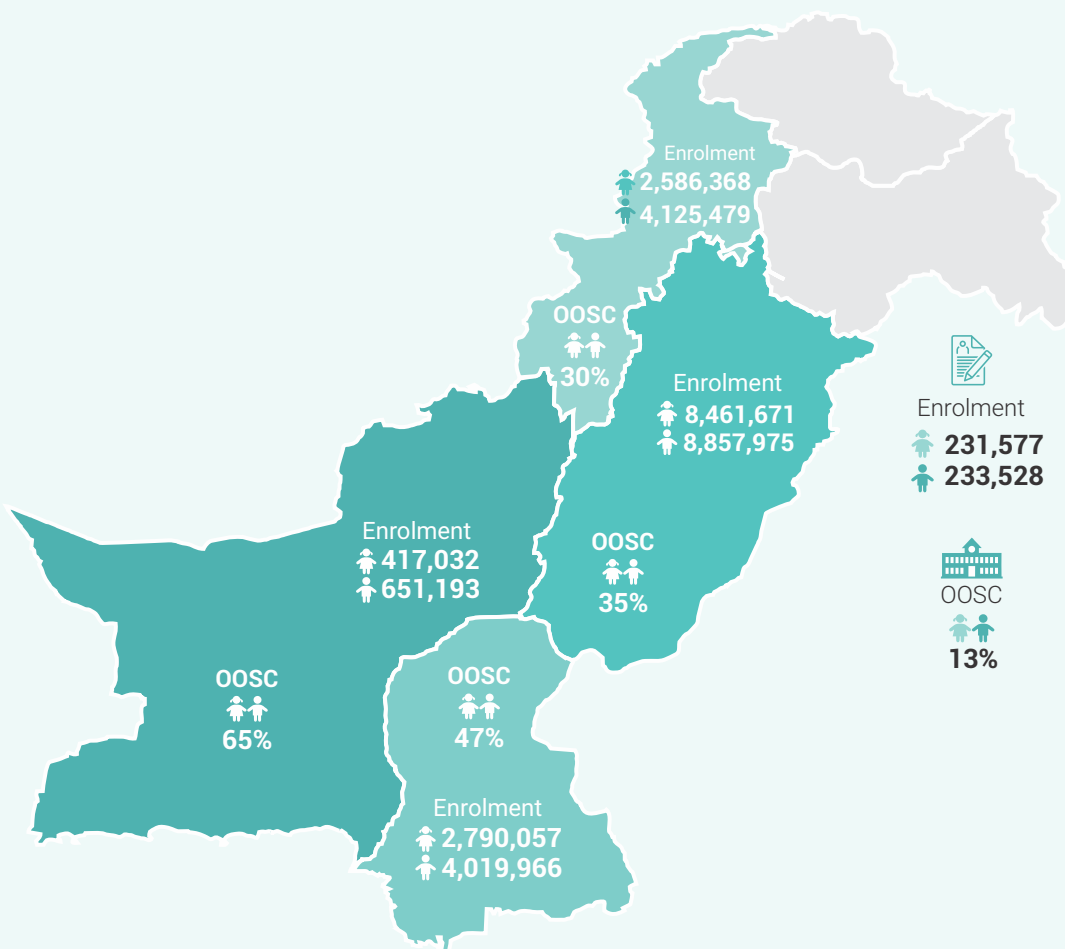
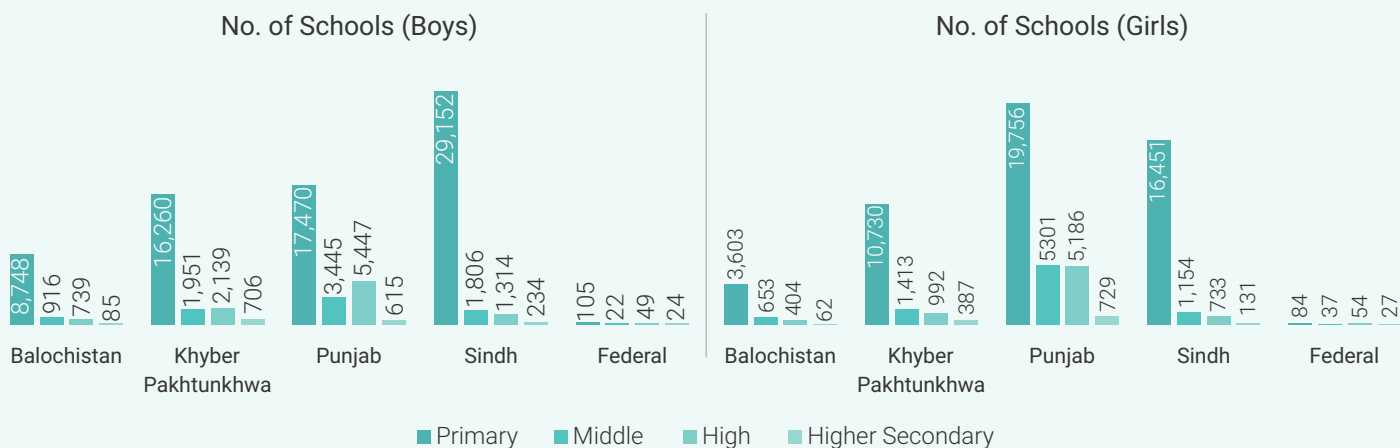


01

# GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

## Conceptual Overview:

Despite significant strides in increasing gender parity in education, deep-rooted gender norms and socio-cultural barriers continue to impede the educational progress of girls and marginalised groups. To dismantle these barriers, Pakistan needs a comprehensive framework that not only addresses gender inequalities in educational access but also challenges the systemic norms and power dynamics that perpetuate these inequalities. It needs to bring in intentional changes in the following areas of education dispensation to ensure each child experiences a meaningful educational journey, regardless of gender, and has an equal chance in the country for a prosperous future.



### Learning Outcomes (Average Score) Grade 4

Subjects	Balochistan		Khyber Pakhtunkhwa		Punjab		Sindh		Federal	
	👤	👤	👤	👤	👤	👤	👤	👤	👤	👤
English	53%	49%	49%	40%	75%	67%	53%	49%	-	-
Urdu	68%	62%	63%	51%	67%	79%	68%	62%	-	-
Mathematics	40%	41%	40%	39%	83%	62%	40%	41%	-	-

OOSC: Out-of-school Children

\*The figures are computed from the Pakistan Education Statistics Report 2021-22 by Pakistan Institute of Education

To truly embed gender equality within Pakistan's education system, it is imperative that every role and function within the education paradigm undergoes a thoughtful and deliberate transformation. This transformation must ensure that gender sensitivities are not merely an afterthought but are central to every decision-making process. Applying a gender lens should be a fundamental approach at every stage—whether it is in identifying challenges, planning strategies, implementing policies, or conducting rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The successful application of Gender Transformative Education in Pakistan hinges on careful attention to the following core elements:



### **Policy and Political Engagement**

A national and sub-national commitment from the political leaders of different spectrums to unanimously act on bringing gender equality into education policies and different realms of life that interact with children's education. Regions like Balochistan, interior Sindh, South Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and others should invest more on education and, especially girls' education to reduce gender disparity.



### **Pedagogy Transformation**

Implementing teacher training programmes that address gender biases, incorporating gender-sensitive curricula, and promoting peer learning among teachers. Special focus on rural areas where traditional gender roles are more entrenched.



### **School Environment**

Reimagining schools as child-friendly spaces, safe and inclusive for all students by adopting a whole school approach. This includes addressing issues like gender-based violence, inadequate sanitation facilities, sports and extracurricular facilities and activities that help attract girls' enrolment and retention in schools.



### **Participation of Children and Youth**

Involving children and youth in decision-making processes at the community and school levels. Providing platforms and the agency to young voices, especially girls, to be heard in different forums.



### **Community Leadership**

Organise community education programmes and ensure School Management Committees (SMCs) are functional and empowered to make decisions for school improvement including budget spending and have more mothers in the group. Engaging local leaders in school governance and ensuring their incentives align with the growth and prosperity of the school. Ensuring grassroots organisations provide support in sensitisation campaigns against harmful gender norms that restricts girls from education.



### **Stakeholder Engagement**

Building partnerships between government, civil society, and the private sector to support gender transformative education. This should be implemented at the district and provincial levels for strong coordination among all the stakeholders.



### **Evidence-Generation**

Conducting research to understand the specific gender norms and power dynamics in Pakistan in areas where gender disparity is stark. The data needs to be more qualitative than quantitative, looking into the demand and supply factors, to have nuanced understanding of the attitudes and behaviours in regards to girls' education.



### **Budget Planning**

The budget planning process needs to be gender disaggregated in order to ensure that planning and resource allocations are equitable towards the historical lapses in the provision of schools and facilities for girls.

## Assessing the Status Quo

The state of gender-transformative education in Pakistan is complex, marked by numerous challenges and significant opportunities. Poverty remains a significant barrier, as many families cannot afford the costs associated with schooling, leading to high dropout rates among girls. Social norms often prioritise boys' education, while security concerns, including harassment and kidnapping, deter many girls from attending school. The quality of education is undermined by poorly qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate facilities. Furthermore, government negligence has resulted in a shortage of schools, especially for girls, with secondary and higher education being even scarcer.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing demand for girls' education, even in conservative communities, signalling a positive shift in attitudes. The government has the opportunity to address gender disparities through increased educational expenditure, building more schools for girls, and ensuring safe and private facilities. Community initiatives have also played a crucial role, with activists and local groups establishing informal schools to fill the gaps left by the government. Legal reforms to combat child labor and child marriage can further support girls' education. International support, such as the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration, can help protect educational institutions from attacks and improve safety for students. Thus, while the barriers are substantial, the pathways to achieving gender-transformative education in Pakistan are clear and attainable through concerted efforts and strategic interventions.

It is important to have a mapping of where each province stands in its policymaking and the implementation of it in regards to Gender Transformative Education.

## Balochistan

### Girls' Participation and Access:

The government, with support from the European Union and UNICEF, has prioritised ten districts with the lowest net enrolment rates (Killa Abdullah, Kohlu, Barkhan, Sherani, Musa Khel, Dera Bugti, Zhob, Killa Saifullah, Jhal Magsi, Washuk) for focused efforts to improve equitable access to quality education. This includes converting primary schools to gender-free schools, deploying more female teachers, and creating a conducive environment for female students.<sup>5</sup>

Efforts have been made to enhance awareness and provide menstrual hygiene management (MHM) facilities in schools, which are crucial for improving female enrolment and retention.<sup>6</sup> However, many schools still lack adequate MHM facilities, significantly impacting girls' attendance.

Initiatives to provide transport facilities for girls to attend middle and secondary schools have been included in the sectoral plan to address mobility issues, especially in remote areas. Despite this, there has been limited progress on the ground.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction of sports programmes for girls, such as the establishment of the first-ever girls' school cricket academy in Quetta under the CRIC4US Program, marks a positive step forward. However, these programmes are still limited in scope and reach.<sup>8</sup>

### Gender-Inclusive Management:

A strategy for mainstreaming gender sensitivity across the education delivery value chain has been developed, including the training and sensitisation of officials on gender-sensitive management and workplace anti-harassment rules.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/stories/european-union-and-unicef-helping-revamp-basic-education-balochistan>

<sup>6</sup> Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) in Public Sector Schools Strategic Plan for Balochistan 2017 – 2022

<sup>7</sup> Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020-2025

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.womenscriczone.com/first-ever-girls-school-academy-started-in-balochistan>

The Balochistan Women Development Department, in collaboration with the Quetta divisional administration, has initiated a comprehensive effort to tackle workplace harassment across the province. Key actions include the formation of anti-harassment committees in all government departments under the Anti-Harassment Act, with strict enforcement measures.<sup>9</sup>

### **Inclusive Policies and School Environment:**

Significant progress has been made in improving school infrastructure, such as constructing separate toilet facilities and providing clean drinking water, with examples like the Government Girls Community Model School in Kachhi District. Additionally, boundary wall construction is underway in several schools to enhance security. Nevertheless, approximately 57.3% girls' schools are without toilets, and around 1,823 schools operate with only one teacher, severely affecting the quality of education.<sup>10</sup>

In general, the participation of children with disability in education is low, with an estimated 65 per cent of school-aged children out of school. The ones who are in school do not receive quality education. BESP 2020–2025 aims to build the capacity of special educators by conducting an assessment of the expertise within the Directorate of Special Education and identifying capacity building needs required to strengthen special education in the province. However, there has not been much progress on this front.<sup>11</sup>

The government has enacted laws to prohibit corporal punishment in schools, supported by policy frameworks and teacher training programmes to promote a safe learning environment. However, the practical enforcement of these laws and the consistent implementation of training programmes across all schools require further strengthening.<sup>12</sup>

### **Technical and Vocational Training:**

While technical and vocational training programmes are part of the broader educational reforms, they predominantly focus on traditional male-dominated fields. There are limited initiatives aimed at encouraging women to pursue careers in non-traditional fields such as engineering, information technology, or other STEM areas, restricting opportunities for female students to engage in diverse career paths.

## **FEDERAL**

### **Gender-Inclusive Planning and Execution:**

Responsibilities have been specifically divided between male and female directorates to ensure that both genders are adequately accounted for in educational planning and execution. However, many policy actions related to the development and delivery of reading and numeracy skills lack explicit gender considerations, which limits the effectiveness of these initiatives in addressing the distinct needs of male and female students.<sup>13</sup>

### **Foundational Learning and Teacher Training:**

The establishment of the Foundational Learning Hub, supported by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office and the World Bank, is a pivotal step in coordinating foundational learning initiatives across federal territories. Despite these advancements, there is a noticeable gap in explicitly incorporating gender-sensitive approaches in teacher training programmes, particularly concerning the specific challenges faced by female students in foundational learning.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1843078>

<sup>10</sup> Balochistan Education Statistics 2022-23

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF - Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Pakistan (2021)

<sup>12</sup> <https://thefridaytimes.com/16-May-2023/banishing-corporal-punishment-for-children>

<sup>13</sup> <https://ese.gok.pk/pages/directorate-of-elementary-and-secondary-education-female>

<sup>14</sup> Federal Foundational Learning Policy 2024

### **Curriculum and Educational Initiatives:**

The policy mandates a dedicated hour for reading in primary schools, piloted in selected institutions under the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) in Islamabad. This initiative, which has been extended to non-formal education institutes, private schools, and madaris, represents a positive move towards enhancing foundational learning. However, the policy lacks specific guidance on ensuring gender-sensitive allocation of resources and activities related to foundational learning, which may result in unequal benefits for male and female students.

Efforts to incorporate digital and tech literacy into the curriculum are essential for preparing students for future challenges. Nonetheless, the absence of explicit gender considerations in these efforts may hinder the ability of the policy to address the digital divide that often disproportionately affects female students.

### **Inter-Provincial Collaboration and Policy Implementation:**

The first Inter-Provincial Secretaries' meeting, held on January 30, 2024, marked a significant step towards collective efforts to improve learning outcomes, particularly in pre-primary and primary grades. This collaborative approach is crucial for the successful implementation of educational policies across different regions. However, the roles and responsibilities related to monitoring and evaluation, including developing district-level monitoring plans and conducting bi-monthly insights, currently lack gender-specific metrics, which could limit the ability to measure and address gender disparities in educational outcomes.<sup>15</sup>

### **Community Engagement and Support:**

The policy encourages fostering partnerships with local libraries, public parks, and other entities to support storytelling and numeracy festivals. These partnerships are intended to enhance community engagement in educational activities. However, the absence of a gender-specific focus in these initiatives may result in missed opportunities to address the unique needs and interests of female students, particularly in areas where cultural norms may limit their participation.<sup>16</sup>

### **Non-Formal Education Sector:**

While the policy has been extended to the non-formal education sector, including madaris and private schools, more structured engagement and support mechanisms are needed to fully integrate these sectors into the foundational learning framework. The current approach lacks explicit gender considerations, which is essential to ensure that both male and female students in non-formal education settings receive equitable opportunities for learning and development.

## **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

### **Gender Parity in Enrolment:**

The sector plan acknowledges the significant lack of gender parity in enrolment across all education levels, particularly in the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs). This recognition has led to targeted efforts, such as the establishment of new girls' secondary schools and the upgrading of primary schools, resulting in a noticeable increase in girls' enrolment at the secondary level. However, despite these efforts, approximately 3.6 million children remain out of school in KP, with around 2.29 million of them being girls, indicating persistent gender disparities.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://mofept.gov.pk/NewsDetail/NzUwNGQxMWUtNjQxYS00NWY3LWI2MWUtZTQ0NGI0NzlkNzIz>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Pakistan Education Statistics Highlights 2021-22

### **Accelerated Learning and Educational Opportunities:**

The sector plan emphasises the need for accelerated learning opportunities for girls, especially those who have lost time due to climate change events and socio-cultural factors. The opening of 500 new Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres in 2023 has played a crucial role in ensuring that girls start their education at an appropriate age, within a gender-sensitive environment.<sup>18</sup> Despite these developments, many girls still face barriers to education, including discriminatory gender norms, child marriage, and safety issues, which are not yet adequately addressed through widespread community awareness programmes.

### **Scholarships and Financial Support:**

Significant scholarship programmes have been introduced, providing financial support to 32,833 girl students from the erstwhile FATA in 2023, with plans to increase this number to 37,758 in 2024 and 43,422 in 2025 at an estimated cost of Rs. 940.5 million. While these scholarships are a positive step, the scale of financial support remains insufficient to meet the needs of all out-of-school girls in the province, highlighting the urgency for expanded financial aid initiatives.<sup>19</sup>

### **Teacher Training and Professional Development:**

The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme has been expanded to include all primary school teachers in KP, training 60,000 teachers with specific modules on gender inclusivity. Additionally, over 18,000 teachers, including a significant number of female teachers, have been trained with a focus on professional development and gender-sensitive teaching practices. However, the overall impact of these training programmes is hindered by the persistent lack of essential school facilities, such as separate toilets for girls, boundary walls, and safe transportation options, which continue to affect girls' attendance and retention.<sup>20</sup>

### **Infrastructure and Safety Concerns:**

While the establishment of new schools and upgrading of existing ones has boosted enrolment rates for girls, many schools, particularly in rural areas, still face significant infrastructure challenges. These include damaged buildings, lack of basic amenities due to recent floods, and ongoing threats from terrorism. The absence of adequate facilities such as separate toilets and boundary walls further exacerbates safety concerns, making it difficult for girls to attend school regularly.

### **Data Collection and Policy Implementation:**

Accurate and comprehensive data on out-of-school children, particularly girls, is essential for targeted interventions. The current sector plan highlights the need for regular and detailed data collection and analysis to inform policy decisions. However, the lack of such data remains a challenge, limiting the effectiveness of policy implementation and the ability to address the specific needs of out-of-school girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## **Punjab**

### **Girls' Stipend Programme and Financial Support:**

The girls' stipend programme in Punjab currently benefits 550,000 students, with an annual budget ranging from Rs 5.5 billion to Rs 6.0 billion.<sup>21</sup> This initiative is a significant driver for improving educational outcomes for girls and highlights the importance of targeted financial interventions in addressing gender disparities in education. However, despite these efforts, the financial planning process in the education sector still lacks a gender-responsive approach, with budgets not being gender-disaggregated, limiting the impact of such initiatives.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nation.com.pk/17-Oct-2023/500-ece-centres-to-be-opened-in-kp-govt-schools>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1791915>

<sup>20</sup> Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Programme (KESP) Contribution Analysis Study

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.pesrp.edu.pk/girls-stipend-program/>

### **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and School Enrolment:**

Since 2015, the promotion of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model has led to provide schooling to 2.5 million students under the Punjab Education Foundation, with a significant focus on girls' education.<sup>22</sup> These initiatives have substantially increased access to education for girls. Nonetheless, while these efforts have expanded educational opportunities, the regulatory framework, including the establishment of an authority to regulate teacher licensing and certification, does not explicitly address gender considerations, potentially undermining the effectiveness of these programmes.

### **Vocational Education and Skills Training:**

The introduction of vocational education and training programmes at the middle level, with explicit gender sensitivity, has ensured that girls receive skills training tailored to market needs. The Punjab Skills Development Fund has successfully trained over 39,745 girls in various vocational skills, improving their employment prospects.<sup>23</sup> However, despite these advances, the provision of quality pre-service and in-service training to education professionals still lacks a specific focus on gender aspects, which could limit the inclusivity and effectiveness of vocational training programmes.

### **Early Childhood Education and WASH Facilities:**

Under the Punjab Education Foundation's PESP-III project, over 12,000 ECE rooms have been established, along with measures to provide WASH (toilets + drinkable water) facilities in ECE rooms across eleven districts.<sup>24</sup> These developments play a crucial role in promoting girls' education by providing safe and conducive learning environments from an early age. However, the development and revision of textbooks and teaching materials continue to lack a gender-sensitive approach, which is essential for fostering an inclusive and equitable education system from the foundational levels.

### **Non-Formal Education and Access for Out-of-School Girls:**

Efforts to promote girls' education at the middle level through existing non-formal education centres have enabled 20,000 out-of-school girls to continue their education. This initiative is vital in ensuring that girls who missed out on formal education can still receive quality learning opportunities. Despite these efforts, the methodologies used in developing quality learning assessment systems and feedback mechanisms do not include gender components, which could limit the ability to accurately assess and address the educational needs of girls.

### **Extracurricular Activities and Life-Skills Education:**

The promotion of extracurricular activities and life-skills-based education is a key component of holistic education. However, the lack of specific gender-targeted strategies in these programmes means that the unique needs and challenges faced by female students may not be adequately addressed. This oversight can hinder the development of critical life skills among girls, which are essential for their personal and professional growth.

## **Sindh**

### **Gender Mainstreaming and Management:**

The establishment of the Gender Unit within the Sindh education sector marks a significant step towards mainstreaming gender initiatives across all educational sub-sectors.<sup>25</sup> A strategic plan has been prepared for

<sup>22</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/endpovertyinsouthasia/bringing-13-million-more-children-school-lessons-punjab>

<sup>23</sup> Punjab Skills Development Fund – Directors Report 2019

<sup>24</sup> Punjab Early Childhood Education Report 2017 – PMIU & PESRP

<sup>25</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1938552/sindh-state-gender-equality-education#:~:text=One%20recent%20success%20has%20been,of%20gender%20gap%2Dclosing%20agendas.>



this unit, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to empower women. This includes a focus on improving gender balance in management positions within the Sindh Education and Literacy Foundation (SELF) and implementing management programmes to train female staff for roles ranging from head teachers to central-level managers. Additionally, policies have been introduced to promote access for women to managerial posts. However, despite these efforts, broader plans for improving the capacity of education managers and decentralised offices, as well as governance and strategic planning, lack specific mention of gender considerations, which could limit the effectiveness of these initiatives in truly transforming gender dynamics in educational management.

### **Equity and Inclusion:**

The Sindh Education Sector Plan (SESP) 2019-2024 addresses equity as a cross-cutting theme, ensuring that disadvantaged children, particularly girls and those with minor learning and intellectual disabilities, are prioritised in the planning and execution of projects. This includes increased focus on demand-side incentive mechanisms, the recruitment and placement of female teachers, and the creation of girl-friendly facilities. The curriculum and textbooks have also been revised to include gender-sensitive content, aiming to foster an inclusive learning environment. However, while there is a strong emphasis on equity, the integration of gender considerations in performance monitoring systems, such as the advanced HRMIS linked with the Performance Management System, remains insufficient, potentially undermining the ability to track and promote gender equity effectively.

### **Girls' Stipends and Financial Incentives:**

A significant budget has been allocated for girls' stipends as part of the efforts to promote female education.<sup>26</sup> However, low utilisation of these funds has been noted, indicating challenges in reaching the intended beneficiaries. Plans have been made for regular verification to eradicate false enrolments and ensure that stipends are performance-based and tied to regular attendance, which could enhance the effectiveness of this program. Nonetheless, the success of these financial incentives is contingent on addressing broader systemic issues, including the integration of gender-sensitive approaches into infrastructure development policies, which currently lack specific provisions to ensure that new or improved facilities meet the needs of female students.

### **Enrolment, Retention, and Barriers to Education:**

Several programmes have been initiated to increase equitable enrolment and retention at all educational levels, with a particular focus on girls and marginalised children. These interventions aim to address barriers to education, including socio-emotional challenges and health and nutrition awareness. However, while these programmes are crucial for improving access to education, the lack of gender-specific strategies in expanding school infrastructure and creating learning-friendly environments poses a significant challenge. The absence of gender considerations in these policies may result in new facilities that do not adequately address the specific needs of female students, thereby limiting the impact of efforts to increase enrolment and retention.

### **Governance and Strategic Planning:**

There has been a strong emphasis on governance, strategic planning, and performance monitoring within the Sindh education sector. However, these areas have been developed without specific mention of gender considerations, which is a critical oversight. The integration of gender-responsive methods into these aspects of educational planning is essential to ensure that governance and strategic initiatives are inclusive and equitable, addressing the unique challenges faced by female students and staff within the education system.

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<sup>26</sup><https://www.dawn.com/news/1840020#:~:text=654%20billion%20has%20been%20allocated,to%20encourage%20female%20literacy%20rate.>

## Pathways Forward: Advancing Gender Transformative Education in Pakistan



**Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Education:** Implement gender-responsive budgeting within the education sector to ensure that financial resources are allocated in a way that addresses the specific needs of girls and boys. This approach ensures that investments in education promote gender equity and inclusivity.



**Inclusive Curriculum Development:** Revise curricula to be more inclusive of gender perspectives, ensuring that textbooks and teaching materials reflect the contributions of women in various fields. Incorporate content that challenges traditional gender roles and promotes equality, fostering an environment of respect and inclusivity in the classroom.



**Promote Gender-Sensitive Pedagogy:** Train teachers in gender-sensitive pedagogy to ensure that classroom interactions, teaching methods, and assessments are free from gender bias. This training should help educators recognize and address the different needs and learning styles of boys and girls, promoting equal participation and success for all students.



**Expand Life Skills Education to Empower Girls, Especially in High Dropout Areas:** Broaden the scope of life skills education with a strong emphasis on empowering girls, particularly in regions with high dropout rates. Providing skills that lead directly to economic opportunities can play a crucial role in addressing issues like child marriages and can encourage families to support their daughters' pursuit of higher education. It's essential that vocational training programmes are tailored to align with local market demands, ensuring that girls acquire skills that enable them to actively contribute in various sectors and enhance their economic independence.



**Promote Gender Equity in STEM Education:** Implement comprehensive initiatives aimed at encouraging female students to pursue careers in STEM fields. This should include mentorship programmes, science festivals, and career counselling sessions that expose girls to the possibilities within these fields. Highlight the achievements of female role models in STEM, both in educational settings and community outreach programmes, to inspire young girls. Additionally, involve parents by organising science festivals and community sessions that emphasise the importance of girls' participation in sciences. Revise school textbooks to prominently feature and celebrate the contributions of women to STEM, ensuring that female students see representation and potential in these fields from an early age.



**Increase Female Representation in Teaching:** Significantly increase the recruitment of female teachers, especially in middle and high schools, to create a safe and supportive learning environment for girls. This measure is crucial to reduce dropout rates among female students and encourage their continued education.



**Regular Gender Audits of School Policies:** Conduct regular gender audits of school policies, practices, and environments to ensure they are inclusive and supportive of both girls and boys. The findings should inform policy adjustments and interventions aimed at promoting gender equity within the school system.



**Integrate Youth Voices in Educational Policy Development:** Establish youth advisory councils within the education sector, separate for boys and girls that include students from diverse backgrounds. These councils should be actively involved in the decision-making processes related to curriculum development, gender policies, and school management, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of young people, particularly girls, are represented and addressed.



**Empower Girls Through Leadership Programmes:** Introduce leadership development programmes specifically aimed at empowering female students. These programmes should focus on equipping girls with the skills needed to take on leadership roles within their schools and communities, encouraging a new generation of female leaders who are confident in advocating for their rights and the rights of others.



02

# EQUITABLE EDUCATION FINANCING

## Conceptual Overview:

Pakistan has experienced disproportionate economic growth, resulting in increased wealth for the affluent while the impoverished population remains marginalised. This disparity has fostered the creation of private schools, hospitals, and other amenities exclusively serving the wealthy, whereas the underprivileged rely on public facilities that frequently fail to deliver high-quality services. However, it is another debate as to whether low- and high-fee private schools are delivering quality education. The significant disparity in educational quality between elite private institutions and public schools further exacerbates the socio-economic divide, thereby perpetuating systemic inequality. To ensure equitable opportunities for children from impoverished backgrounds, it is imperative for the government to implement affirmative measures aimed at elevating underdeveloped regions to the same standard as more developed areas, with substantial investments in the education and health sectors.

Political will to improve a country's education system is often reflected in its financial commitments to education. In order to ensure that all children go to school and receive quality education, the country will have to divert significant resources towards education as part of its overall growth plan, to ensure the deficit in the education facilities - in terms of schools, basic facilities, teachers, and the essentials to improve the quality of education are all provided to accommodate more than 26 million out-of-school-children.



**Policy and Political Engagement:** Allocating financial resources based on the specific needs of marginalised communities, including poor and rural areas, with a focus on reducing gender disparities in education.



**Targeted Scholarships and Stipends:** Providing financial assistance to girls and children from low-income families to cover educational expenses, including tuition, uniforms, and transportation.



**Infrastructure Development:** Investing in the development of school infrastructure in underserved areas, ensuring that facilities are safe, accessible, and conducive to learning for all students.



**Community and School Partnerships:** Establishing partnerships between schools and local communities to identify and address financial barriers to education, with a focus on supporting girls' education.



**Capacity Building for School Management:** Training school administrators on effective financial management and equitable resource allocation to ensure funds are used efficiently to support marginalised students.



**Monitoring and Accountability:** Implementing robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that allocated funds reach the intended beneficiaries and are used for their intended purposes.



**Ensuring People's Agency to Demand:** Ensuring people are aware of their rights and demand resources allocated towards education and school facilities from their respective political leaders.

## Assessing the Status Quo

Equitable financing in Pakistan's education sector faces significant challenges, primarily due to low public expenditure, inefficiencies in resource allocation, dependency on inconsistent donor funding, and socioeconomic barriers. Public expenditure on education has historically been below 2% of the GDP, far below the international benchmark of 4%, leading to inadequate educational resources, especially for poor children.<sup>27</sup> Budget allocations often do not translate into actual expenditures, with a significant portion diverted to recurrent expenses, leaving little for developmental needs. Additionally, reliance on donor funding, which fluctuates due to geopolitical dynamics, further complicates the financing landscape. Socioeconomic factors, including poverty and gender disparity, exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult for poor families to afford education-related costs.

Despite these issues, several opportunities exist to improve equitable financing in education. Increasing public investment to meet or exceed the 4% of GDP target is crucial, along with enhancing fiscal discipline and broadening the tax base. Improving efficiency and accountability in resource allocation through robust financial management systems and transparency can reduce wastage and ensure funds reach those in need. Public-private partnerships can mobilise additional resources and expertise, while targeted interventions, such as *Waseela-e-Taleem* and gender-sensitive policies, can address the specific needs of vulnerable groups.

<sup>27</sup>Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan. (2024). Pakistan Economic Survey 2023-24: Education. [https://finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter\\_24/10\\_education.pdf](https://finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_24/10_education.pdf)

## Balochistan

According to the Balochistan' Finance Minister, in the new 2024-25 budget:<sup>28</sup>

- 535 new posts would be created in the next financial year and that 9,394 existing posts from Grades 9 to 15, which are currently vacant, would be filled on merit, reducing shortage of teachers and making dormant schools functional again.
- Rs. 3.5bn from federal grants to be spent on improvement in education in 22 lowest ranked districts
- Rs. 5bn to be allocated for public sector universities, which are facing a financial crisis. Rs. 2bn had been released by the provincial government for 11 universities currently facing crisis conditions.
- Rs. 32bn would be allocated for development spending on higher education, and Rs114.8bn for non-development spending.

### Shortcomings:

The province's budget allocates Rs.126 billion for education, a mere 13% of the total budget, reflecting a marginal increase from the previous year. Despite this, the province struggles with a literacy rate of 54.5%, with female literacy standing only at a meagre 27%.<sup>29</sup>

A significant barrier to education in Balochistan is the lack of basic infrastructure. Only 15% of primary schools have electricity, forcing many children to endure extreme heat during school hours. Moreover, only 23% of primary schools have access to clean water, further impeding the learning environment.<sup>30</sup>

The province also suffers from severe teacher shortages and the phenomenon of ghost schools. There are only 3 teachers per school on average in Balochistan. Islamabad in comparison has 15 teachers per school. Approximately 10,000 teaching posts remain vacant, and there are widespread reports of non-functional schools.<sup>31</sup>

The inequitable distribution of resources further compounds these issues. Balochistan's education sector receives a smaller budget proportion compared to its needs, and the funds allocated are insufficient to address systemic deficiencies. This disparity is particularly evident in rural and underprivileged districts where educational facilities and opportunities are severely lacking.

## Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

- Total education budget is Rs. 362.7 billion, marking a 13% increase from the previous year.
- Elementary and Secondary Education: Rs. 326.86 billion, with plans to establish 350 schools in rented buildings.
- Higher Education: Rs. 35.82 billion, an 11% increase, with the establishment of 30 new degree colleges.
- The development budget for the merged districts is ~10% of the entire education budget allocated for the merged districts. This is substantially high in percentage terms from the development budget for the settled districts and in the absolute levels.<sup>32</sup>

### Shortcomings:

**Declining Education Budget:** Although there has been a 13% increase in the education budget, raising it to Rs. 362.7 billion, the overall proportion of the provincial budget allocated to education has historically fluctuated, limiting consistent long-term planning and targeted interventions for marginalised groups.

**High Recurrent Costs:** The 2024-25 budget indicates that recurrent costs still dominate, limiting funds available for improving infrastructure in remote and marginalised areas, which are crucial for enhancing education quality and access.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1841190>

<sup>29</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/letter/2255295/illiteracy-in-balochistan>

<sup>30</sup> Pakistan Education Statistics 2021-22

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.pakp.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/da-Citizen-Budget-2024-25.pdf>

**Insufficient Funding for Infrastructure:** Despite the increased allocation, much of the funding is directed towards maintenance rather than new infrastructure development. Schools in poor districts continue to suffer from inadequate facilities, which hampers educational outcomes.

**Inconsistent and Insufficient Professional Development for Teachers:** The budget provides some allocations for teacher training, but it remains insufficient to address the disparities fully, particularly in underserved districts. Limited funding will restrict training for the teachers in the rural areas, which has always been skewed in favour of urban teachers.

**Ineffective Financial Management and Planning:** Improvements in financial management are noted, but persistent inefficiencies prevent equitable resource distribution, impacting educational quality in poorer districts.

**Lack of Autonomy in Resource Utilisation:** Schools in poorer regions often lack the flexibility to allocate funds to address their specific challenges, exacerbating existing inequities. This is largely due to the limited autonomy at the school level and the fear of audit and accountability of the proper usage of funds.

**Inflationary Pressures:** The budget's response to inflation includes salary increases, but this does not fully address the broader financial pressures that exacerbate educational inequities in marginalised regions.

## Punjab

- Rs. 39 billion has been earmarked under the Annual Development Programme 2022-2023 for school education.<sup>33</sup>
- Rs. 6.87 billion are allocated to complete the ongoing development projects in Punjab.
- Rs. 2.6 million have been earmarked for the upgradation of the schools across the province.
- Rs. 500 million have been allocated for the School Nutrition Programme - a new initiative that feeds children one time meal across the province in public schools.
- Rs. 13.76 billion has been earmarked for new development initiatives designed to strengthen the educational framework.
- Rs. 5.5 billion have been reserved for alternative educational models for outsourcing schools.
- Rs. 2.62 billion will support schools operating under public-private partnerships.
- Rs. 1.83 billion has been allocated for afternoon schools, providing extended learning opportunities for students who are involved in economic-labour during the day.

## Shortcomings:

### Uneven Distribution of Funds

**Geographical Disparities:** Urban areas receive more funding per student compared to rural areas. Rural schools often lack essential facilities and face higher dropout rates, reflecting an inequitable distribution of resources. The Punjab Education Sector Plan (PESP) acknowledges that rural areas are often neglected, with primary schools in these regions particularly suffering from insufficient funding and resources.

**Allocation to Marginalised Groups:** Financial allocations targeting marginalised groups are often insufficient. Programmes for girls, children with disabilities, and other marginalised groups receive a smaller share of the budget compared to mainstream education sectors.

The gender parity index in Punjab stands at 1.03, indicating nearly equal access for both genders, but this does not account for disparities in quality and resources available to female students, especially in rural areas.

### Budget Utilisation Issues

**Underutilisation of Development Funds:** A significant portion of the development budget remains unspent

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/966500-over-rs485bn-allocated-for-education-sector>

each year, impacting the implementation of projects aimed at improving educational equity. For instance, in 2021-22, Punjab had a substantial amount of its development budget unutilised.

This underutilisation is partly due to inefficiencies in planning and executing projects crucial for addressing disparities in educational infrastructure and access.

**Focus on Recurrent Expenditures:** The overwhelming focus on recurrent expenditures, particularly salaries, leaves limited funds for developmental initiatives that could directly improve educational equity. With 88% of the recurrent budget allocated to salaries,<sup>34</sup> there is insufficient emphasis on infrastructure, learning materials, and other critical resources.

### Gaps in Addressing Special Needs

**Insufficient Support for Special Education:** Financial allocations for special education are inadequate, resulting in limited availability of specialised facilities and trained teachers for children with special needs. This inadequacy perpetuates inequities in educational access and quality for these students.

### Teacher Allocation and Training

**Unequal Distribution of Teachers:** There is a significant gap in the allocation of qualified teachers, with rural and marginalised areas facing severe shortages. This imbalance affects the quality of education and perpetuates educational inequities.

The shortage of teachers is exacerbated by financial constraints, preventing the recruitment of additional teachers needed to fill vacant posts. As of November 2023, 25% of sanctioned teaching posts were vacant in Punjab.<sup>35</sup>

## Sindh

Budgetary provision for the education sector in Sindh has been proposed to be Rs. 454 billion for the year 2024-25 against last year's budget of Rs. 334 billion. It also represents 25% of the total Current Revenue Expenditure.<sup>36</sup>

- Rs. 800 million stipend for Girls Students
- Rs. 7,500 million for the provision of free textbooks
- Rs. 4,500 million for Education Sector Plan Implementation Activities
- Rs. 2,375 million for restoration of Flood Damaged Schools

### Effectiveness in Targeting Poorer Districts

**Focused Interventions:** The Promoting Low-Cost Private Schooling in Rural Sindh (PPRS) programme targeted districts with high numbers of out-of-school children, significant gender disparities in enrolment, and households located far from the nearest primary school. This targeted approach helped maximise the impact of the interventions.

**Increased Enrolment and Learning Outcomes:** The PPRS programme significantly increased school enrolment by 30 percentage points compared to control groups and improved test scores, demonstrating that targeted PPPs can effectively address educational disparities in poorer districts.

**Supportive Infrastructure:** Providing free textbooks, teaching materials, and teacher training were critical components of the PPRS program, ensuring that schools in poorer districts had the necessary resources to deliver quality education.

<sup>34</sup> Institute of Social and Policy Sciences. (2023). Right to Education Monitor: Analyzing the Implementation of Article 25-A in Pakistan. [http://i-saps.org/upload/report\\_publications/docs/1697711647.pdf](http://i-saps.org/upload/report_publications/docs/1697711647.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Data Stories. (2024). Annual School Census 2023-24. <https://www.datastories.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Annual-School-Census-2023-24.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> The Express Tribune. (2024, October 27). 36 per cent hike proposed in education budget. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2471754/36-per-cent-hike-proposed-in-education-budget>

## Shortcomings:

### Budget Allocation and Utilisation Issues

**Significant Allocations but Inefficient Utilisation:** For 2024-25, the Sindh government allocated Rs. 454 billion to the education sector, the largest share of the Rs. 3.056 trillion total budget. However, despite this substantial allocation, the historical trend indicates that the actual utilisation of these funds often falls short. For instance, significant portions of the allocated development budgets remain unspent, leading to lower revised estimates compared to initial budget estimates.<sup>37</sup>

**Revenue and Development Disparities:** Substantial portion of the budget is allocated for the recurrent costs, with only a smaller fraction dedicated to development projects. This skewed allocation prioritises operational costs over the development of new educational infrastructure and programmes, which are crucial for long-term educational improvements and equity.

**Discrepancies in Development Budgets:** Historically, there have been large discrepancies between budget estimates and revised estimates for development expenditures. For example, the revised estimates for 2018-19 and 2019-20 were significantly lower than the budget estimates, indicating inefficiencies in project execution and fund management.<sup>38</sup>

### Systemic Fiscal Challenges

**Dependence on Federal Transfers:** A significant portion of Sindh's budget relies on federal transfers (62%), which introduces uncertainty and variability in available funds for the education sector.<sup>39</sup> This dependence can lead to fluctuations in budget allocations and affect the stability of long-term educational planning.

**Inadequate Financial Planning and Execution:** There is a consistent pattern of lower-than-planned spending in development budgets. For example, in 2020-21, the education sector saw a substantial gap between the allocated Rs. 13.86 billion for development and the revised estimate of Rs. 10.05 billion, highlighting issues in financial execution and planning.<sup>40</sup>

**Prioritisation of Immediate Needs over Long-Term Goals:** The budget often prioritises immediate operational needs over strategic long-term investments. This approach hampers the development of new schools, improvement of existing infrastructure, and implementation of innovative educational programmes necessary for addressing educational inequities

## Pathway Forwards:



**Expand and Strengthen Girls' Stipend Programmes:** Substantially increase the outreach and coverage of girls' stipend programmes, ensuring that all eligible girls, particularly from marginalised and underserved communities, benefit from financial assistance. Regularly adjust the stipend amounts to reflect inflation, maintaining their purchasing power and effectiveness in covering educational expenses.



**Comprehensive Subsidies for Educational Expenses:** Implement broad-based subsidy programmes to cover all indirect costs associated with education, such as transportation, uniforms, and stationery. These subsidies should be facilitated through existing social safety nets like the Benazir Income Support Programme or the Ehsaas Cash Programmes initiated during the pandemic in 2020 to alleviate the financial burden on poor families and ensure that education is genuinely accessible to all.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1840020#:~:text=KARACHI%3A%20While%20presenting%20the%20Sindh,the%20total%20current%20revenue%20expenditure.>

<sup>38</sup> Bringing All Girls To School – A Case for More Investment – Pakistan Coalition for Education

<sup>39</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2471786/sindh-focuses-on-relief-and-development>

<sup>40</sup> Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives. (2022). Social sector budget allocations in Sindh: 2016-17 to 2020-21. <https://www.cpd-pakistan.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Social-Sector-Budget-Allocations-in-Sindh-2016-17-to-2020-21.pdf>





**Targeted Investment for Marginalised Groups:** Ensure the development budget for education is prioritised towards marginalised districts to uplift their education indicators. This includes funds for more schools, better facilities and stipends and scholarships for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enrol and complete their education at least until the 12th grade.



**Commitment to Adequate Education Financing:** Firmly commit to allocating a minimum of 4% of GDP to the education sector, recognizing this investment as critical to addressing Pakistan's educational challenges. This level of funding is essential for developing the necessary infrastructure, recruiting and training additional teachers, and upgrading facilities to accommodate the 26 million out-of-school children. While provinces are currently dedicating approximately 20-25% of their annual budgets to education, the responsibility lies with the Federal Government to bolster revenue streams and close the funding gap by an additional 2 percentage points. This coordinated effort is important to achieve universal education in Pakistan.



**Increased Public-Private Partnerships:** Public-Private Partnership programmes across provinces are increasingly playing a crucial role in alleviating the burden on the public education system by enabling the private sector to assist in enrolling out-of-school children. However, it is imperative that these programmes maintain a clear focus on ensuring the government's continued responsibility in this partnership. The government must remain committed to covering tuition fees and associated costs for children from low-income families, thereby enabling their sustained access to education. Additionally, robust assessment and monitoring mechanisms should be developed and implemented to ensure that private schools participating in these partnerships provide high-quality education, adhering to established standards and contributing to the overall educational outcomes.



**Performance-Based Budgeting:** Implement performance-based budgeting in the education sector, where the allocation of funds is tied to specific outcomes and goals. This approach ensures that resources are used efficiently and effectively, promoting accountability and continuous improvement in educational delivery.



**Increase in Development Funding:** The proportion of the development budget from the total outlay on education requires a significant increase. Currently it hovers between approximately 8-15%. A larger development budget is essential for targeted investments in infrastructure, such as building and upgrading schools, particularly in underserved regions. It is also important for hiring more teachers and improving teachers' training programmes and to provide financial assistance to low-income families.



**Increase Revenue for Education:** Enhance revenue generation for the education sector by implementing comprehensive measures to document and digitise the economy, thereby expanding the tax base. By bringing more individuals and businesses into the formal tax brackets, the government can significantly increase its tax revenue. A portion of this additional revenue should be earmarked specifically for education.



**Enhancing Efficiency in Fund Utilisation:** Address the chronic issue of lapsed education funds by streamlining bureaucratic processes and reducing delays in fund disbursement. This can be achieved by overhauling the tender and contracting procedures, which often impede timely infrastructure development and other critical projects. Introduce clear timelines, coupled with stringent accountability measures, to ensure that funds are allocated and utilised based on actual needs and that projects are completed within the stipulated time frames.



**Linking Education Financing to Equity Outcomes:** Establish a framework that links education financing to specific equity outcomes, such as reducing the gender gap in school enrolment and improving access for children with disabilities. Funding allocations should be tied to the achievement of these outcomes to ensure that financial resources directly contribute to reducing disparities.



**Youth-led Advocacy Campaign on Equitable Financing:** Civil society organisations should actively prioritise the involvement of youth as the frontline voice in their advocacy programmes and engagements. It's crucial that the activities and events they organise provide young people with meaningful opportunities to interact with policymakers and political leaders. Ensuring the participation of youth from diverse backgrounds will bring a broader representation of regional voices and issues, making advocacy efforts more inclusive and reflective of the entire country's needs.



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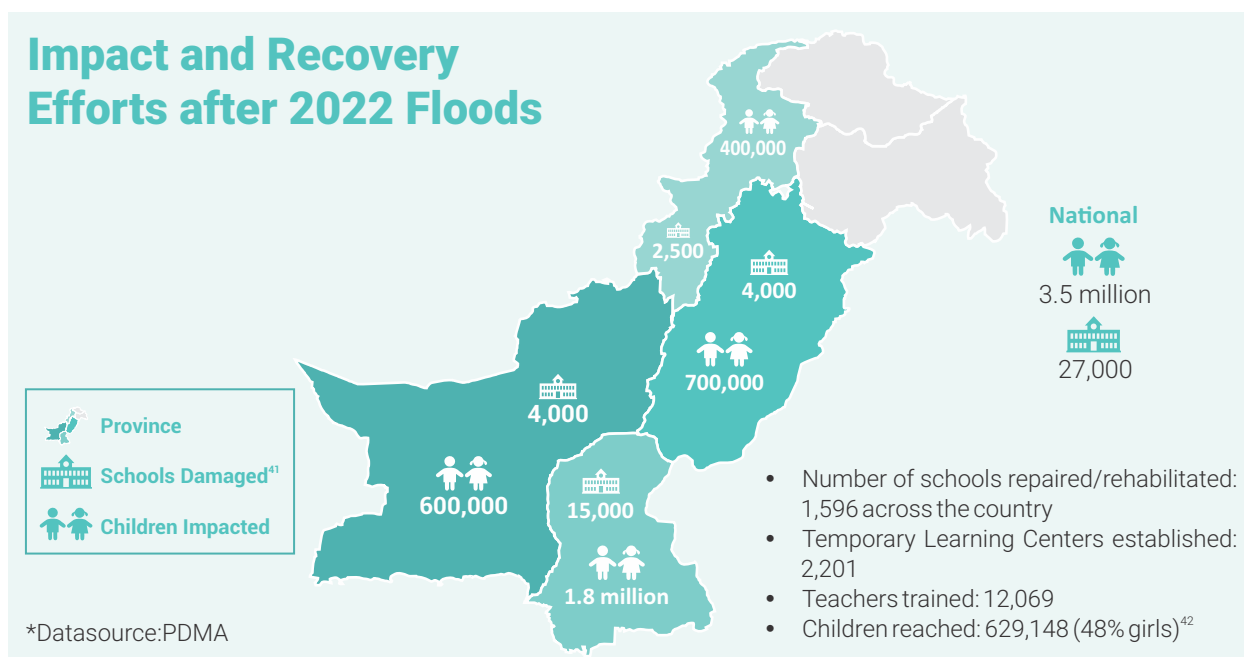
# EDUCATION RESILIENCE

## Conceptual Overview:

Education resilience is crucial for ensuring that all children in Pakistan, regardless of their socio-economic background or gender, have continuous access to quality education, even in the face of challenges such as natural disasters, political instability, and socio-economic barriers. Building a resilient education system means not only addressing these immediate challenges but also creating long-term strategies that enable schools, communities, and students to adapt, recover, and thrive despite adversities. The following table outlines the key variables essential for achieving education resilience in Pakistan.

<b>Disaster Preparedness and Management</b>	Developing and implementing comprehensive disaster preparedness plans for schools, including training for staff and students on emergency response and recovery.
<b>Flexible Learning Opportunities</b>	Providing alternative learning pathways, such as online education, community-based learning centres, and flexible school schedules, to ensure continuity of education during disruptions.
<b>Community and Parental Engagement</b>	Involving parents and community members in supporting education during crises, including creating safe learning environments and ensuring children's well-being.
<b>Psychosocial Support Services</b>	Offering psychosocial support to students and staff affected by trauma or stress due to emergencies, including counselling and mental health programmes.
<b>Infrastructure Resilience</b>	Strengthening school infrastructure to withstand natural disasters, including building safe and durable classrooms and providing essential facilities.
<b>Policy and Governance</b>	Establishing strong policies and governance frameworks that prioritise education resilience and ensure coordinated response efforts during emergencies.
<b>Resource Allocation and Mobilization</b>	Securing and effectively allocating resources for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery, including financial, human, and material resources.

The education system in Pakistan faces significant resilience challenges, exacerbated by recurrent natural disasters, particularly floods. These natural calamities have a profound impact on the educational infrastructure, disrupting the schooling of millions of children. The 2022 floods in Pakistan highlighted the vulnerability of the education sector, with extensive damage to school buildings, educational materials, and infrastructure, leading to prolonged interruptions in learning activities. Such disruptions not only affect the current educational attainment of children but also have long-term implications for the country's socio-economic development.



<sup>41</sup> PDMA - Pakistan Floods 2022 - Post-Disaster Needs Assessment

<sup>42</sup> Education Sector Working Group Dashboard (2024): <file:///Users/moizhussain/Downloads/ESWG%20Dashboard%20June%202024.pdf>

The lack of resilient infrastructure and preparedness leads to substantial interruptions in education, exacerbating access issues for marginalised communities, particularly in rural and remote areas. Girls are disproportionately affected, facing higher risks of dropping out due to socio-cultural barriers and safety concerns during emergencies. Additionally, these interruptions cause significant learning loss, with students missing out on critical knowledge and skills. The psychosocial impact of disasters further hinders academic progress, as children struggle with trauma and mental health issues, highlighting the urgent need for integrated psychosocial support within the education system.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities to enhance the resilience of Pakistan's education sector. Investing in flood-resistant educational infrastructure and incorporating disaster risk reduction principles into school design can mitigate future disruptions. Strengthening inclusive education policies to ensure continued access for marginalised groups, especially girls, is crucial. Developing robust remote learning strategies, expanding digital infrastructure, and training teachers in online pedagogies with a special focus on addressing gender gaps in digital divide can help maintain educational continuity during crises. Furthermore, community engagement in resilience planning and integrating psychosocial support mechanisms can address the mental health needs of students, fostering a supportive learning environment. These measures can build a more resilient education system that withstands natural disasters and ensures equitable access to quality education for all children.

## Structural Lapses and Efficiencies in Immediate Educational Recovery in Pakistan

### Introduction

Pakistan is a country that has been on the fault lines of climate change events, witnessing recurrent floods and other natural disasters. During the pandemic and in the floods of 2015 and then of 2022 the educational infrastructure and its lack of resilience was completely exposed. The public schools during the pandemic were completely closed for around 1.5 years, discontinuing the education process for poor children enrolled in the schools. A large number of schools were impacted during the floods of 2022, again displacing students from the educational process.

This section examines structural lapses and efficiencies in immediate recovery efforts in the educational sector across Pakistan's four provinces utilising data and insights from various reports and documents.

### Infrastructure Vulnerability

Educational infrastructure across the country is highly vulnerable due to poor construction quality, inadequate maintenance and at times being very close to the river channels in the country. The architecture of the schools also does not account for seismic activities and the flood patterns in the country.

In Sindh, close to 20,000 schools were destroyed during the 2022 floods, impacting 2.9 million students and highlighting the urgent need for resilient construction standards.<sup>43</sup> Other provinces face similar issues and have witnessed damage to the school infrastructure. The provincial governments have acknowledged the need for better construction practices, yet implementation remains very slow. The monsoons of 2024 have already begun, but the damaged schools have not been rehabilitated yet. Just in Sindh, reconstruction and repair costs requires Rs224 billion.<sup>44</sup> But Sindh had allocated only Rs16.5bn in the previous budget of 2023-24 for the education department's development schemes. It means that the department would need 13 years to reconstruct all schools damaged in the floods, even if the development budget for education were to be diverted fully towards this purpose.

<sup>43</sup> [https://pdma.gos.pk/Documents/Flood/Flood\\_2022/Miscellaneous\\_Reports/Pakistan%20Floods%202022%20-%20Post-Disaster%20Needs%20Assessment.pdf#:~:text=URL%3A%20https%3A%2F%2Fpdma.gos.pk%2FDocuments%2FFlood%2FFlood\\_2022%2FMiscellaneous\\_Reports%2FPakistan%2520Floods%25202022%2520](https://pdma.gos.pk/Documents/Flood/Flood_2022/Miscellaneous_Reports/Pakistan%20Floods%202022%20-%20Post-Disaster%20Needs%20Assessment.pdf#:~:text=URL%3A%20https%3A%2F%2Fpdma.gos.pk%2FDocuments%2FFlood%2FFlood_2022%2FMiscellaneous_Reports%2FPakistan%2520Floods%25202022%2520)

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1802814>

## Emergency Preparedness

**Lack of Early Warning Systems:** Across all the provinces, the absence of effective early warning systems to alert schools and communities about impending disasters remains a critical gap. This unpreparedness increases the damage to educational infrastructure and disrupts learning processes. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has been working on improving these systems, but progress has been uneven across provinces.

**Insufficient Training for Staff:** School staff across these provinces often lack training in disaster risk management. During the 2022 floods, the lack of preparedness among school staff in Sindh and other provinces highlighted the need for comprehensive training programmes to manage the crisis effectively.

The lack of mandatory training for teachers and staff exacerbates the problem, as disaster preparedness measures are implemented voluntarily rather than as a requirement. Evaluations highlighted that emergency plans are often limited, infrequently assessed, and poorly coordinated with key stakeholders, affecting the efficiency of disaster responses in schools.<sup>45</sup> This situation underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms and consistent training programmes to enhance disaster resilience in educational institutions across the province.

## Coordination and Governance

Poor coordination between provincial authorities, local governments, and NGOs is a significant issue in Sindh, Punjab, KP, and Balochistan. This fragmentation leads to delays and inefficiencies in disaster response and education recovery efforts. A report by UNDP identified that the coordination efforts in Sindh were often hampered by bureaucratic hurdles and lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities among various stakeholders. Punjab has seen some improvements with better coordination through initiatives led by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), but challenges remain in aligning efforts across all districts.

UNDP's 4RF for school recovery in Pakistan emphasises centralised coordination and local implementation. A Recovery and Reconstruction Unit (RRU) at federal level to manage policies, funding, and monitoring, linked to provincial and district RRUs. Key themes include speed, flexibility, and capacity building, with roles clarified across government levels. The framework ensures transparency through an Independent Oversight Board and third-party monitoring. Collaboration with the private sector shall also be sought. The framework, however, does not delineate the coordination with the grassroots workers, the NGOs on the ground, etc. who can mobilise more quickly for school-level response.

## Financial Constraints and Inefficiencies

Delays in the disbursement of recovery funds are prevalent in Sindh, Punjab, KP, and Balochistan. Significant pledges from the international community often take time to materialise, hindering timely reconstruction and rehabilitation of educational facilities. For instance, Sindh received substantial pledges following the 2022 floods, but delays in funding slowed down recovery efforts.

Pakistan has utilised only 29.4% of the donor funding for flood relief projects from the total pledged amount of \$3.36 billion by international donors and \$364 million from local funds for the 2022 flood relief efforts. By May 2024, only \$1.091 billion had been spent on flood relief, with significant variations in fund utilisation across different provinces. Balochistan had the lowest utilisation rate at 1.7%, while Punjab fully utilised its allocated funds, and Sindh utilised 41.2%.<sup>46</sup>

In Sindh, 700 partially damaged schools have been repaired through the provincial Annual Development Programme (ADP) 2022/2023, and the planned rehabilitation of 1,800 schools has an approved PC-1 by the

<sup>45</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13753-018-0175-8>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.firstpost.com/world/pakistan-utilises-only-29-4-of-donor-funding-for-2022-flood-relief-13779118.html>

Federal Government. Additionally, 997 temporary learning centres have been established, enabling over 91,449 children, including 38,592 girls, to continue their education amidst the recovery efforts.<sup>47</sup>

### Socio-Economic Barriers

High levels of poverty in rural areas of the country make it difficult for families to prioritise education during crises, leading to increased dropout rates. The economic pressure on families during the floods forced many children, especially girls, to drop out of school. In Sindh, poverty levels are particularly high, with over 60% of the population living below the poverty line, exacerbating educational disparities during disasters.<sup>48</sup> Punjab, although economically better off than other provinces, still faces significant challenges in rural areas where poverty impacts school attendance and retention.

The physical damage of schools, the loss of livelihoods and the displacements puts the education priority for girls at a back burner. Even if the schools get rehabilitated or temporary learning centres are up, the cultural and socio-economic bias against girls gets more pronounced, resulting in boys being preferred over girls for educational opportunities.

This was observed during COVID-19 where girls were more involved in domestic responsibilities and also had less access to internet devices, etc. to continue their education. The temporary learning centres set up in refugee camps are also not much trusted by the families to send their daughters.

### Insufficient Technological Integration

#### Lack of Digital Infrastructure

The digital infrastructure in Pakistan, critical for sustaining education, particularly in the aftermath of climate change disasters like the 2022 floods, faces significant challenges. The digital learning landscape is marked by poor and unequal infrastructure, which is a major barrier to education continuity. Only 34% of households have digital access, and a mere 12% have access to laptops or computers, exacerbating the digital divide intensified by socio-economic and geographic factors.<sup>49</sup> Provinces like Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which were severely affected by the floods, highlight these disparities. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for example, the majority of the province lacks electricity for up to 20 hours per day, making the implementation of digital learning solutions particularly challenging. Similarly, the digital divide is more pronounced in rural areas compared to urban centres. The 2022 floods further disrupted already fragile educational infrastructures, emphasising the need for resilient and inclusive digital solutions. In response, initiatives like the 'Teleschool' programme have been launched, yet their impact as per Malala Fund's COVID Impact on Education report was not significant as only 20% of children (both boys and girls) were spending time on TV for education purposes.<sup>50</sup>

## Pathway Forwards:



### Infrastructure Repair and Disaster-Resilient Construction:

Prioritise the urgent repair and rehabilitation of educational facilities damaged by natural disasters, such as the 2022 floods. Integrate disaster-resilient architectural designs in the reconstruction process to ensure long-term durability and safety of school buildings, minimising the impact of future calamities on educational continuity. Ensure the schools located near to the riverbeds are shifted to zones less prone to flooding.

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/51126/51126-004-sd-en\\_4.pdf](https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/51126/51126-004-sd-en_4.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Reform Support Unit, School Education & Literacy Department, Government of Sindh. (n.d.). Sindh education sector plan and roadmap (2019-2024). <https://rtw.sindh.gov.pk/storage/tenders/l8AyCNrrFtle0BKKjRjssKR34NxrYvgJjgrn3bk1.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> <https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/HEXCEXFK/download/285CL2FG/Pakistan%20Digital%20Learning%20Landscape%20Analysis.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> Girls Education and COVID-19 Impact on Education in Pakistan



### **Accelerated Learning Programmes for Displaced Students:**

Develop and implement accelerated learning programmes tailored for children who have experienced educational disruptions due to disasters or displacement. These programmes should focus on enabling students to catch up on lost learning and reintegrate into the mainstream education system effectively. Much of the programmes implemented in different regions are supported by various donors operating in the country. Each provincial education office needs to streamline the curriculum and the content for a concerted approach towards accelerated learning in every province.



### **Digital Education Readiness for Climate-Induced Disruptions:**

Equip schools with the necessary digital infrastructure and train teachers in online instruction to ensure that education can continue uninterrupted during climate-induced disruptions. Special attention should be given to ensuring girls have equal access to digital devices and online learning platforms. Parents should be sensitised with the means of digital learning to ensure they trust the process and allow their children the use of the internet, especially the girls.



### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**

Enhance monitoring and data collection systems to be explicitly gender-responsive, capturing and analysing gender-specific educational outcomes and challenges. This data should directly inform planning and budgeting processes, ensuring that resources are allocated to address gender disparities effectively.

Ensure that the learning from the immediate responses and recovery processes are continuously feeding the improvements in the system's ability to respond to the disasters - from school level to the central secretariats.



### **Strengthening Inter-Provincial Coordination for Resilience:**

Institutionalise mechanisms for inter-provincial coordination, especially in the context of responding to educational disruptions caused by natural disasters. This is specially important in the case of donors who operate in silos and risk duplication of efforts. The education departments in the office need to ensure that the responses from donors are streamlined and are aimed to support each other rather than compete in the recovery process. This coordination should include the sharing of best practices, migration data, and collaborative planning to ensure a cohesive national response.



### **Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Education:**

Implement community-based disaster preparedness education programmes that empower students, teachers, and parents with the knowledge and skills to respond effectively to natural disasters. These programmes should be integrated into the school curriculum and include regular drills and simulations.



### **Environmental Education and Sustainability:**

Design curriculum on environmental protection and sustainability using indigenous knowledge of the local communities and incorporate into the school curriculum to raise awareness about climate change, sustainability, and disaster risk reduction. This education will empower students to become advocates for environmental protection and resilience within their communities.



### **Decentralise and Empower School Leaders for Disaster-Resilient School Management:**

Decentralise the immediate response and recovery measures at the school level and empower the school leaders and teachers through proper training and resources on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Integrate disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies into school planning and infrastructure development. Schools should be designed and operated with a focus on minimising risks from natural hazards, ensuring that they serve as safe havens during and after emergencies.

#### **Flexible Learning Options During Disruptions:**



Develop flexible learning options, such as mobile schools, radio-based education, and community learning centres, to ensure that education continues even during periods of displacement or disruption. These options should be designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students, including those in remote or conflict-affected areas. Programmes such as TeleTaleem and others need to be streamlined with the school curriculum and the examinations to ensure different learning options available to different communities are all contributing to achieve the required learning outcomes and preparing students for the examinations.

#### **Psycho-Social Support for Students and Teachers:**



A whole set of psycho-social support programmes for students, parents and teachers should be designed and rolled out from the schools. These programmes should provide counselling, trauma-informed care, and stress management to help the local community recover, and rebuild after the crisis and to collectively console and support individuals experiencing mental health issues.

#### **Strengthening Early Warning Systems in Schools:**



Establish and strengthen early warning systems in schools to provide timely information about impending disasters. These systems should be linked with local and national disaster management authorities to ensure coordinated and effective responses.

#### **Ensuring Continuity of Education for Refugees and IDPs:**



Implement community-based disaster preparedness education programmes that empower students, teachers, and parents with the knowledge and skills to respond effectively to natural disasters. These programmes should be integrated into the school curriculum and include regular drills and simulations.

#### **Mobilising for Climate-Induced Loss and Damage Funds**



Pakistan made a compelling case for the Loss and Damage Fund at COP28, positioning itself as a key advocate for the Global South, which has been disproportionately affected by climate change. Having successfully contributed to the establishment of this fund, Pakistan now needs to further actively mobilise voices from other vulnerable countries in the Global South and ensure a sustained global discourse around loss and damage. Pakistan should leverage its leadership role in international forums like COP and the UN, pushing for the prioritisation of education in climate resilience funding. By rallying support from countries facing similar challenges, Pakistan can advocate for a dedicated portion of the Loss and Damage Fund to be allocated to rebuilding climate-resilient educational infrastructure, training staff for disaster preparedness, and integrating digital learning solutions that can function during crises.



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