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Why Gender Equality in Basic Education in Pakistan?



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1. Introduction

Education is a universal, fundamental human right, recognized as such by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and reaffirmed in international human rights conventions.

Pakistan has committed to achievement of equality of access to education at the national level and is also a signatory of international declarations and agreements upholding equality in access to basic education, including the World Declaration on Education For All (1990, Jomtien, Thailand) and the Dakar Framework for Action for EFA (April 2000, Dakar, Senegal).

This booklet examines the data in Pakistan relating to the number of primary schools and teachers, the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) and literacy rates of girls and boys (women and men). The data are analysed in light of Pakistan's goals and commitments to achieving gender equality, to identify the current level of gender parity in Pakistan's basic education. The key factors leading to gender inequality in education in Pakistan are then discussed and recommendations are given for improving equality in access to education.

Pakistan: An overview

Pakistan is located in the South and West Asia region, bordering India, Iran, Afghanistan and the Arabian Sea.

Total estimated population of Pakistan for 2010 is over 173 million. About two third or 64% people live in rural areas.

The ratio of men to women in the Pakistan population is skewed in favour of men, with 108 males per 100 females.¹ This figure indicates gender inequality in society, because it reflects either a high rate of premature deaths of females compared to males, or a cultural preference for male children, or both.

1 Pakistan Census Organization. 1998, Census Report of Pakistan, Government of Pakistan.

2. Pakistan's National and International Commitments to Equality in Access to Education

Pakistan has made national commitments to achieve equal access to education for all citizens of the country and has also signed international agreements and conventions relating to equality in access to education. This section briefly describes those commitments.

2.1. National Commitments

Constitution

Pakistan's Constitution, framed in 1973, declared the country's commitment to providing education for all. According to Article 37, "the State shall ... (b) remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within the minimum possible period; (c) make technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merit". Recently, through a Constitutional Amendment No 18, free and compulsory education for the children aged 5 to 16 years has been declared a fundamental right. Article 25-A of the Constitutions provides that:

"The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by the law."
(Article 25-A, Constitution of Pakistan).

This is consistent with Article 26 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which states that "Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages ... Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit".

National Plan of Action (2001-2015)

To honour the international commitment made in signing the Education for All Dakar Framework for Action (April 2000), the Government of Pakistan developed the National Plan of Action (NPA) on Education for All 2001–2015.² The objectives of the NPA are to ensure access to education for disadvantaged rural and urban population groups, particularly girls and women; to promote community participation and ownership of basic education programmes; and to improve the relevance and quality of basic education.

National Education Policy (2009)

The new National Education Policy of Pakistan was approved by the Government in September 2009.³ It recognizes that Pakistan has persistent gender and rural-urban

2 Ministry of Education, National Plan of Action 2001-2015, Government of Pakistan.

3 Ministry of Education, National Education Policy 2009, Government of Pakistan, http://www.moe.gov.pk/nepr/NEP_2009.PDF

disparities in access to education and it aims to revitalize the existing education system and enable Pakistan to fulfil its commitments to the Education for All goals and the Millennium Development Goals relating to education.

2.2. International Commitments

Pakistan has committed to various international conventions and agreements relating to equal access to education for boys and girls (men and women), as outlined below.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

On 10 December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Pakistan was one of the 48 Member States which voted in favour of the declaration that day. According to Article 26 of the UDHR, “Everyone has the right to education” and “Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory”.

Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

The Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979.⁴ This document defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Pakistan acceded to the Convention on 12 March 1996. By accepting the Convention, Pakistan committed to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, which was convened by the United Nations in September 1995 in Beijing, China.⁵ As a signatory to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by consensus on 15 September 1995, Pakistan made a commitment to the advancement of women and to ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. In particular, the Declaration committed Pakistan and the international community to promoting “people-centred sustainable development ... through the provision of basic education, life-long education, literacy and training ... for girls and women” (Article 27), and ensuring “equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education” (Article 30).

4 Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw>.

5 Beijing Declaration, Fourth World Conference on Women, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm>

World Declaration on Education For All (2000)

The World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (also known as the “Jomtien Declaration”) was the pledge made by representatives from 155 countries at the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, convened in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. In the declaration, the signatories, including Pakistan, agreed that every person should be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs, and called for an “expanded vision” of education, encompassing factors such as universalizing access to education and promoting equity.

Dakar Framework for Action

In April 2000, representatives from 164 countries, including Pakistan, adopted the “Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments” at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. As a signatory of this declaration, Pakistan acknowledged education as a fundamental right for all people, regardless of gender or age; recognized the need to make comprehensive efforts to eliminate gender discrimination; and committed to implementing integrated strategies for gender equality in education that recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values and practices. In particular, the signatories committed to ensuring that “in the learning environment, the content, processes and context of education must be free of gender bias, and encourage and support equality and respect. This includes teachers’ behaviours and attitudes, curriculum and textbooks, and student interactions”.⁶

The Dakar Framework is a collective commitment to achieving the following EFA Goals:

- (i) expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- (ii) ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- (iii) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- (iv) achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- (v) eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and

⁶ Dakar Framework for Action, World Education Forum, http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/framework.shtml

- (vi) improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Declaration was adopted by 189 nations at the Millennium Summit in New York in September 2000. From the actions contained in this declaration, eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were drawn up to respond to the world's main development challenges. All 192 United Nations Member States, including Pakistan, have agreed to work towards achieving the MDGs by 2015. MDG Goal 2, "Achieve universal primary education" is a commitment to achieving equality in access to primary education for all boys and girls by 2015.

3. Access to Basic Education in Pakistan: Key Facts and Figures

This section examines the statistics relating to the number of primary schools and teachers and the Net Enrolment Rates (NERs) for boys and girls in Pakistan, in order to gauge the current level of gender disparity in basic education.



3.1. Schools

Without enough primary schools, it is impossible to achieve universal primary education. Sufficient numbers of schools for both boys and girls is a requirement for equality in access to education.

According to the Pakistan Ministry of Education, there are a total of 146,691 primary schools in Pakistan. Of these, 43.8 percent are schools for boys, 31.5 percent are schools for girls and the remaining 24.7 percent are schools with Mix enrolment of both boys and girls. Thus Pakistan has fewer schools for girls than for boys. At the provincial or regional level, there are also more boys' schools than girls' schools. The table below shows the number of schools by province or region.

Table 1: Number of boys', girls' and mixed primary schools by province/region

Province / Region	Schools for Boys	Schools for Girls	Mixed schools	Total
Punjab	22,248	23,258	10,398	55,904
Sindh	18,646	7,810	21,337	47,793
North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)	12,111	8,060	2,041	22,212
Balochistan	7,107	2,898	373	10,378
Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)	1,043	1,934	598	3,575
Gilgit-Baltistan	538	277	1,048	1,863
Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)	2,532	1,975	75	4,582
Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT)	84	58	242	384
Pakistan total	64,309	46,270	36,112	146,691

Source: Pakistan Education Statistics 2006-07, AEPAM, Ministry of Education.

A comparison of urban and rural figures indicates that, overall, in both urban and rural areas of Pakistan, there are more boys' schools than girls' schools. As shown in the table below, in urban areas of Pakistan 27 percent of primary schools are boy schools, 24 percent are girls' schools and 49 percent are co-educational schools. In rural areas, 47 percent of primary schools are boys' schools, 33 percent are girls' schools, and 20 percent are co-educational schools. Co-educational schools are less common in rural areas than in urban areas, indicating that in rural areas there is less approval for educating girls and boys together, and also indicating that it is likely that a smaller proportion of girls in rural areas, compared to urban areas, have access to primary schools.

Examining the data at the provincial or regional level, however, indicates that three provinces or territories: Punjab, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) have greater numbers of girls' schools than boys' schools in both urban and rural areas. Girls' education is positively correlated with higher educational attainment level of male population and urbanization. In Punjab, the high number of girls' schools is therefore likely to be related to the higher education attainment level or literacy rate among male members of the population and urbanization in the province, compared to other provinces.

Table 2: Number of primary schools in urban and rural areas

Province /Region	Urban				Rural			
	Boys	Girls	Mixed	Total	Boys	Girls	Mixed	Total
Punjab	2,216	2,435	5,007	9,658	20,032	20,823	5,391	46,246
Sindh	1,808	1,587	3,896	7,291	16,838	6,223	17,441	40,502
NWFP	675	534	610	1,819	11,436	7,526	1,431	20,393
Balochistan	688	287	158	1,133	6,419	2,611	215	9,245
Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)	31	74	76	181	1,012	1,860	522	3,394
Gilgit-Baltistan	28	24	112	164	510	253	936	1,699
Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)	-	-	-	-	2,532	1,975	75	4,582
Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT)	-	2	121	123	84	56	121	261
Pakistan	5,446	4,943	9,980	20,369	58,863	41,327	26,132	126,322

Source: Pakistan Education Statistics 2006-07, AEPAM, Ministry of Education.

3.2. Teachers

In Pakistan, girls are often not permitted to attend school unless they have a female teacher. It is therefore very important that there is gender parity in the teaching staff.

According to the Ministry of Education, there are 425,445 teachers in Pakistan. Of these, 53 percent are male and 47 percent are female.

While most provinces/Areas have more male teachers than female teachers, in three provinces/Areas: Punjab, AJK and ICT, there are more female teachers than males.

Table 3: Number of teachers in primary schools of Pakistan, by province

Province / Region	Male	Female	Total
Punjab	80,760	106,345	187,105
Sindh	72,915	43,653	116,568
NWFP	46,258	29,923	76,181
Balochistan	12,285	6,351	18,636
AJK	3,217	4,361	7,578
Gilgit-Baltistan	2,301	2,046	4,347
FATA	7,108	4,457	11,565
ICT	758	2,707	3,465
Total	225,602	199,843	425,445

Source: Pakistan Education Statistics 2006-07, AEPAM, Ministry of Education.

A comparison of urban and rural figures indicates that there are relatively few female teachers in rural areas compared to urban areas. In rural areas of Pakistan, 61 percent of teachers in primary schools are male. This figure conceals the diversity between provinces, however. In Sindh province for example, 86 percent of teachers in rural areas are male. In rural areas of Punjab, AJK, and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), however, there are more female teachers than males. The numbers of female teachers for Punjab, AJK and ICT are consistent with the relatively high numbers of girls' schools in those areas of Pakistan.

The table 4 shows the urban and rural figures for each province or region/area.

Table 4: Number of teachers in primary schools in urban and rural areas

Province/ Region	Urban			Rural		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Punjab	14,315	38,140	52,455	66,445	68,205	134,650
Sindh	20,593	33,640	54,233	52,322	10,013	62,335
KP	5,326	6,686	12,012	40,932	23,237	64,169
Balochistan	2,573	1,765	4,338	9,712	4,586	14,298
AJK	145	470	615	3,072	3,891	6,963
Gilgit-Baltistan (FANA)	174	386	560	2,127	1,660	3,787
FATA	-	-	-	7,108	4,457	11,565
ICT	56	1,653	1,709	702	1,054	1,756
Total	43,182	82,740	125,922	182,420	117,103	299,523

Source: Pakistan Education Statistics 2006-07, AEPAM, Ministry of Education.

The lower percentage of female teachers in rural areas of Pakistan, can be attributed to fewer schools for girls in rural areas (and therefore lower demand for female teachers) and also to factors such as non-availability of educated women within the local community to serve as teacher, security problems and poor housing and transport in rural areas, which deter non-local women from working as teachers in such areas.⁷

3.3. Net enrolment rates

The primary Net Enrolment Rate (NER) is the number of pupils of official primary school age⁸ enrolled in primary education, as a percentage of the total population in that age group. A high NER denotes a high rate of enrolment in education by the official school-age population. The NER is therefore an indicator of the level of accessibility of education for school-age children.

The primary NER figures over the period between 2000 and 2008 indicate that the NERs for girls are consistently lower than boys, thereby indicating that in Pakistan girls have less access to primary education than boys. The Primary level NERs for boys and girls are shown in the table below.

7 UNESCO, 2008, Global Monitoring Report 2009: Overcoming inequality: why governance matters, Paris, UNESCO/Oxford University Press.

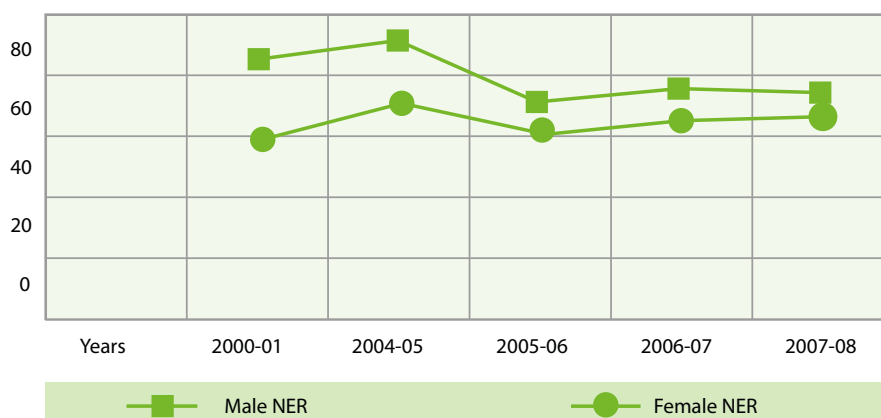
8 In Pakistan, the official primary school age is 5 to 9 years old.

Table 5: Primary Net Enrolment Rates, Pakistan (2000–2008)

Year	Male NER	Female NER
2000-01	67.5	45.8
2004-05	73.3	55.7
2005-06	56	48
2006-07	60	51
2007-08	59	52
2008-09	61	54

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Surveys 2001-08.

Figure 1: Primary net enrolment rates, Pakistan (2000–2008)



Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Surveys 2001-08.

When comparing NERs across the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, North West Frontier Province (NWFP, now re-named as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Balochistan, it is clear that NERs for boys are higher than the NERs for girls in all four provinces.

Table 6: Primary net enrolment rates, Pakistan (2005–2008), by province

Province	2006-07			2007-08			2008-09		
	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both
Punjab	64	59	62	62	59	61	64	60	62
Sindh	56	43	50	55	46	51	57	49	54
KP	56	41	49	55	41	49	58	45	52
Balochistan	49	32	41	47	35	41	51	36	44
Overall	60	51	56	59	52	55	61	54	57

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Surveys.

A comparison of urban and rural figures indicates that the NERs of girls are consistently lower than the NERs of boys in rural areas, but in urban areas the NERs of girls are sometimes higher than the NERs of boys. In urban areas of Punjab, for example, the girls' NERs in 2006-07 and 2007-08 were higher than the boys' NERs.

Table 7: Primary net enrolment rates in urban and rural areas

Region/ Province	2005-06			2006-07			2007-08		
	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both	Boys	Girls	Both
URBAN AREAS	66	64	65	67	65	66	66	67	66
Punjab	72	68	70	69	70	70	71	72	71
Sindh	62	63	62	67	61	64	61	62	62
NWFP (KP)	59	52	55	59	53	56	59	55	57
Balochistan	51	42	47	58	49	54	61	53	57
RURAL AREAS	53	42	47	57	46	52	56	46	51
Punjab	56	47	52	62	55	59	59	54	56
Sindh	48	34	42	49	31	41	51	35	44
NWFP (KP)	54	40	47	56	39	48	55	39	47
Balochistan	36	23	30	46	28	38	42	29	36

Source: Pakistan Social & Living Standards Measurement Surveys.

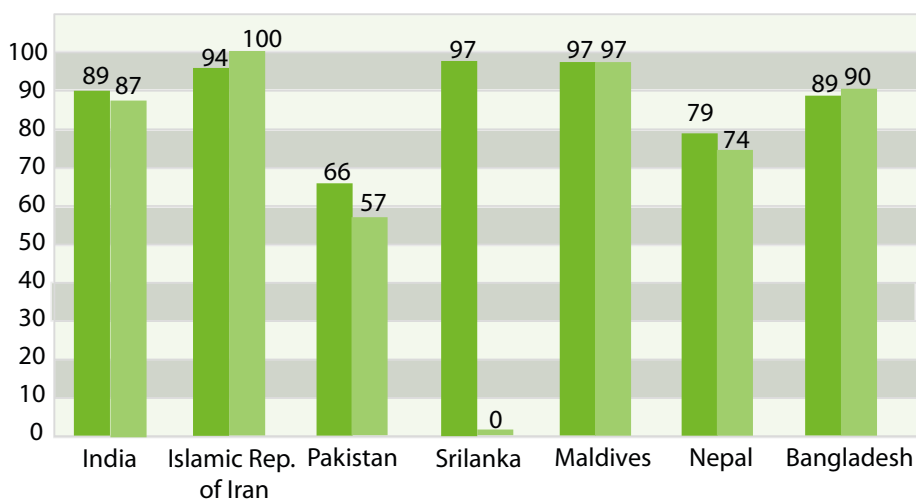
Although Pakistan has a higher "Human Development Index" ranking than Nepal and Bangladesh, compared to these countries and others in the South and West Asia region Pakistan has the lowest NERs for both boys and girls. As the table below shows, the NERs are generally positively correlated with public expenditure on education, indicating that greater expenditure may lead to higher NERs.

Table 8: Human Development Index, Public Expenditure on Education and Literacy Rates; Countries in South and West Asia

Country	Human development index ranking	NER boys	NER girls	Public expenditure on education (as % of GNP)	Literacy rate (aged 15 +)%
Iran	94	94	100	5.2	84
Sri Lanka	99	97	97	5.4	91
Maldives	100	97	97	8.3	97
India	128	89	87	3.3	65
Pakistan	136	66	57	2.7	54
Nepal	142	79	74	3.2	55
Bangladesh	140	89	90	2.8	52

Source: Human Development Report 2007-08, and UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009.

Figure 2: Net Enrolment Rates – Countries in South and West Asia



Source: UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009.

4. Literacy in Pakistan: Key Facts and Figures

Literacy is at the heart of basic education, and is essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing rapid growth of population, and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy.



While no standard definition exists, literacy can be understood as “a context-bound continuum of reading, writing and numeracy skills”.⁹ Thus there is not a simple division between “literate” and “illiterate”, but there is instead a range of levels of skills, which differ according to the context. In simple terms, literacy can be defined as the acquisition of basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. In the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Surveys, literacy is defined as the ability to read a newspaper and to write a simple letter.

According to the PSLM Survey data, literacy rates for girls and women are consistently lower than rates for boys and men.

Table 9: Literacy rates for males and females, by province

Province	2006-07			2007-08		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
Punjab	67	48	58	70	48	59
Sindh	67	42	55	69	42	56
NWFP (KP)	67	28	47	68	33	49
Balochistan	58	22	42	66	23	46
Pakistan (overall rates)	67	42	55	69	44	56

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement surveys.

The figures indicate that literacy is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Nevertheless, the female literacy rate is consistently lower than the male literacy rate in both urban and rural areas and across all provinces and regions of Pakistan. Gender disparity in literacy rates is higher in some provinces (Khyber Pakthunkwa and Balochistan) than others (Punjab and Sindh), however.

⁹ UNESCO, 2005, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life, Paris, UNESCO.

Table 10: Literacy rates in urban and rural areas

Region / Province	2005-06			2006-07			2007-08		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
Urban Areas (Overall)	79	64	71	79	65	72	80	63	71
Punjab	80	67	73	79	68	73	78	66	72
Sindh	80	65	72	80	65	73	81	64	73
KP	73	45	59	75	46	61	79	51	64
Balochistan	77	40	59	76	42	61	84	41	64
Rural Areas (Overall)	57	31	44	60	30	45	64	34	49
Punjab	58	37	47	61	38	50	66	40	53
Sindh	54	17	37	52	16	36	57	20	40
KP	62	27	44	65	24	44	65	29	46
Balochistan	46	13	31	52	15	35	58	16	39

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Surveys.

When examining the data at the district level, large gender disparities can be seen in some districts. For example, in Jacobabad district of Sindh province, the female literacy rate is only 9 percent, compared to the male rate of 50 percent. Worse in Kohistan district of KP, the female literacy rate is only 6 percent, compared to the male rate of 50 percent.

Table 11: Districts with high gender disparity

Province and district	Male	Female	Total
Punjab			
Rajanpur	44	16	31
Lodhran	50	26	38
Rahim Yar Khan	52	25	39
Muzaffar Garh	52	27	40
Bahawalpur	53	33	43
Sindh			
Tharparkar	44	12	29
Jacobabad	50	9	31
Thatta	48	16	34

Province and district	Male	Female	Total
Badin	48	20	35
Mir Pur Khas	56	24	41
KP			
Kohistan	50	6	29
D I Khan	52	18	35
Bonair	61	14	36
Tank	58	16	37
Upper Dir	61	16	39
Balochistan			
Kohlu	34	4	20
Nasirabad	38	6	23
Musa Khel	43	6	26
Dera Bugti	44	2	26
Qillah Saifullah	48	11	30

Source: PSLM, p. 111-117

The female literacy rate shows an increasing trend over the past eight years, rising from 32.2 percent in 1999 to 44 percent in 2007-08. Likewise, for males the figure rose from 59.2 percent to 69 percent.

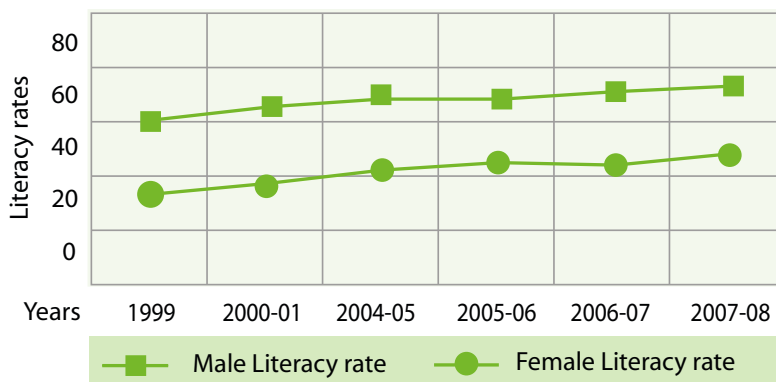
The table and figure below show the progress in literacy rates in Pakistan over the past eight years.

Table 12: Literacy rates for males and females (1999–2008)

Year	Male literacy rate	Female Literacy rate
1999	59.2	32.2
2000-01	62.8	34.8
2004-05	65.0	40.0
2005-06	65.0	42.0
2006-07	67.0	42.0
2007-08	69.0	44.0
2008-09	69.0	45.0

Source: PSLM Surveys.

Figure 3: Literacy rates for males and females (1999–2008)



Source: PSLM Surveys.

Despite improvements in literacy rates over the past decade, Pakistan still has much to strive for in achieving the EFA goals and MDGs. In particular, the figures indicate that girls and women are facing barriers in access to education and this problem is severe in rural and remote districts of the country. In some areas of the country, education is still a dream for boys and unimaginable for girls.

5. Current Level of Gender Equality in Access to Education

The figures discussed above indicate that while there are smaller gender disparities in urban areas than in rural areas, and some provinces show higher levels of gender parity than others, overall there is significant disparity in access to education between girls and boys in Pakistan. Pakistan has higher numbers of schools for boys than for girls and higher numbers of male teachers than female teachers. Furthermore, school attendance is much higher for boys than for girls. The primary net enrolment rate for girls is only 52, indicating that around half of Pakistani women will never attend school.¹⁰ This figure masks the considerable variation in school attendance rates between provinces, however. In rural Balochistan province, for example, only 31 percent girls of age 5-9 attend primary school.¹¹

Literacy is a core component of basic education, but despite the Government's commitments to providing basic education to all, Pakistan has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in the world. At present, the overall literacy rate of those aged 15 and above is 56 percent.¹² Furthermore, significant gender disparity is evident in Pakistan, with a 69 percent literacy

¹⁰ Ministry of Economic Affairs and Statistics, 2008, Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2006-07, Government of Pakistan.

¹¹ PSLM Survey 2008-09.

¹² *Ibid.*

rate for males, compared to a 44 percent literacy rate for females.¹³ The data of latest PSLM Survey (2008-09) indicate that only 45% women are literate compared with 69% literate males in Pakistan.

In the EFA Development Index (EDI), a composite measure of overall progress towards meeting the Dakar EFA goals, Pakistan is ranked 118 out of 129 countries, and is therefore ranked among the countries with “low” EDI.¹⁴ Furthermore, Pakistan is ranked lower than other countries in the South Asian region, as shown in the table below.

Table 13: EFA Development Index, 2009

Country	Ranking	Level of EDI
Maldives	49	High
India	102	Low
Bangladesh	109	
Nepal	110	
Pakistan	118	

Source: EFA Development Index, UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2009.

The figures indicate that, at the current rate of progress, Pakistan will be unable to achieve the EFA goals and MDG Goal 2 by 2015. The following sections of this booklet examine the reasons for the gender disparity in education and make recommendations regarding what needs to be done in order for Pakistan to achieve equality in access to education.

6. Reasons for Gender Disparity in Access to Education in Pakistan

This section discusses the various factors which contribute to gender disparity in access to education in Pakistan.

Poverty and absence of free and compulsory education for all

Up to March 2004, primary education in Pakistan was not free. Parents had to pay school fees and bear expenditure on the purchase of textbooks etc. These expenditures or direct costs kept many girls and boys from the poor families away from the school. School fees were abolished and government started distributing free textbooks to all students in public sector schools. This has increased enrolment in primary schools, yet there are about 5 million

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ UNESCO, 2008, Global Monitoring Report 2009: Overcoming inequality: why governance matters, Paris, UNESCO/Oxford University Press.

school aged children who are not enrolled in primary schools. One main reason is that primary education is still not completely free. Parents have to pay some amount as School Fund and bear expenditure on purchase of note books and other stationary items for their children. Secondly, government has though legislated for compulsory primary education but these laws were never enforced.

If educating women and girls costs the family money (fees, cost of uniforms, transport costs, etc.) and if a girl's or woman's labour is required at home (i.e. if there is a high opportunity cost for educating girls and women) there is little incentive to educate them.

Poverty is linked closely with low education levels. When girls do not become educated due to lack of funds for education in their household, a vicious circle is perpetuated. Because of lack of education, women cannot earn an income and their household does not maximize its income-earning potential, so the household income remains low and therefore the household continues to be unable to afford to educate girls.

Low education budget

Historically, Pakistan has been allocating insufficient financial resources for education. Although, Pakistan repeatedly committed to raise its education budget up to 4% of GDP, but on average its spending has remained around 2% of GDP during last 20 years. Scarcity of resources hampered the efforts of education departments to open more schools, provide missing facilities in schools, and offer incentives to girls from poor families. Hence, low education budget is another inhibiting factor which has deprived children from marginalized groups to acquire basic education, particularly girls from rural areas and poor segments of the society have suffered most. Food incentive offered by World Food Programme in under-developed districts and payment of stipend by the government has led to substantial improvement in the enrolment and retention of girls in schools.

Cultural norms restricting freedom of movement of girls and women

Cultural norms in many parts of Pakistan require that girls and women either stay within the house or must ask permission to leave the house. If permitted to leave, women must always be accompanied by a male household member or other women and children.¹⁵ Such measures are designed to prevent any harm to a girl, as being harmed, or even perceived as being harmed, would cause her to lose her "honour" and that of her family, and make it difficult, or impossible, for the family find a suitable husband for her and would therefore devalue her both socially and economically.

While such values can be rationalized, they stand between girls and their prospects for education as these values limit the movement of girls and women and often prevent them from attending school. Given such values, if a girl does not have a male family member who can accompany her to school, she may not be permitted to go to school, especially when

15 Jejeebhoy S.J. and Sathar, Z. 2001. "Women's Autonomy in India and Pakistan: The Influence of Religion and Region". *Population and Development Review*, Vol 27, pp. 687-712.

there is a long distance to travel (whereas a boy's access to education is not dependent on being escorted to school and is not so dependent on the length of travel required).

These cultural restrictions are now changing with education of male members of the society, increased contact with outside world, and impact of media. However, still there exist some pockets where girl's education is not encouraged. Distant location of secondary schools from home prevent many parents to allow continuation of their studies.

Girls' enrolment drops off sharply with each 500-metre increase in distance from the closest school admitting girls and this 'distance penalty' accounts for 60% of the gender gap in enrolments.¹⁶

Gender division of labour

In Pakistan, as in many other countries in the world, there is a clear division of gender roles in terms of labour, with women being responsible for housework and men responsible for supporting the family productively, through agricultural work or wage employment outside of the home. Given that women are expected to be responsible for housework, and are often not permitted to work outside of the home, there is little incentive to educate girls and women as the education they would receive is not perceived as being useful in the home.

Cultural preference for male children

In Pakistan, bearing sons increases the status of a family, but daughters are considered a liability because daughters are less economically valuable (they are generally not permitted to join the workforce and earn an income, as this might put them in situations that would risk the family's honour) and they are expected to one day marry and leave the family. Hence, while educating boys is seen as a good investment, educating girls is seen as a monetary loss. Parents are therefore much more likely to educate their sons than their daughters.

Shortage of schools

In Pakistan, parents generally prefer schools to be sex-segregated but there is a shortage of girls' schools, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, not only must girls often have their own school, it is important for girls' schools to be easily accessible, as girls are not permitted to travel long distances to school. Hence, when there are few girls' schools or schools are not easily accessible; many girls are not able to access education.

Shortage of female teachers

Another important factor is the shortage of female teachers, especially in rural areas. According to cultural norms, girls should be taught by female teachers, so when there are insufficient female teachers, many parents do not enrol their girls in school.

¹⁶ UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010.

Rural parents strongly prefer to have girls educated by women, but the legacy of low investment in girls' education means few local women have appropriate qualifications. It is also difficult to attract qualified female teachers to rural areas from other parts of the country.¹⁷

Conflict

Ongoing conflict between various groups in parts of Pakistan has compounded the issues affecting girls' access to education. When there is poor security, parents are even less willing for their girls to attend school. In addition, schools, which are already scarce, are often destroyed by the fighting in conflict zones, and in some areas girls' schools are deliberately destroyed, which further restricts girls' opportunities to access education. Although Government of Pakistan with the support of international community is now re-constructing destroyed schools, but the process of re-building is taking time and meanwhile girls have been deprived of their fundamental right to education. Furthermore, insecure areas are less attractive to female teachers than other areas of the country, thus leading to fewer girls being educated in such areas.

7. What Needs to be Done

As pointed out in the Pakistan National Education Policy document (2009), "It is common knowledge, as well as a proven outcome of many studies that discrimination exists in the education system in various forms. The inequity has been the result of poor implementation and social customs."¹⁸ Despite improvements in recent years, it is evident that the girls in Pakistan continue to face significant disadvantages in access to education.

Achieving gender equality in education requires ensuring equal opportunities to learn and equitable treatment within school and also requires equal incentives for gaining an education, including equal opportunities in terms of employment and civic participation in society and equal wages.

Recommendations for achieving gender equality in basic education are provided below.

Spend more on education

Currently, the Government of Pakistan is spending about 2 percent of GNP on education. This is insufficient, given the educational needs of the country. The Government must commit to allocating 7 percent of GNP to the education sector and commit to the proportionate allocation to various sub-sectors of education, especially girls' and women's education. The new National Education Policy of 2009 has made strong commitments and policy recommendations for such steps. Immediate implementation of these will help Pakistan

¹⁷ UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*.

¹⁸ Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy 2009*, Government of Pakistan, p. 58. http://www.moe.gov.pk/nepr/NEP_2009.PDF

to get closer to achieving the EFA goals and MDGs. A recent analysis of budget and public sector expenditure on education has revealed that spending on education has actually declined, during 2007-2009, which is a matter of great concern.

Build more schools and train more teachers

The Government of Pakistan needs to take pragmatic steps to ensure sufficient numbers of schools for both girls and boys and sufficient numbers of trained teachers (female and male), especially in rural areas. Ensuring sufficient numbers of teachers requires increasing salaries, ensuring standard contracts for teachers, and ensuring provision of transport and day care centres for female teachers.

Make primary education free and compulsory for both boys and girls

If education were free and compulsory, more parents would send their girls to school. The Government should ensure that not only are school fees covered, but that girls from low-income families receive free text books, uniforms, transport and lunch. This strategy has been successful in other countries of the region. For example, people of Sri Lanka have been enjoying free education over the last 50 years. As a result, Sri Lanka has seen remarkable advancements in human development, in spite of internal conflict and upheaval.

Introduce flexible school timings and region-specific school calendars

In order to reach children who work to supplement their family income or livelihood, especially girls who are engaged in household or farm work during typical school hours, it is necessary to introduce flexible school timetables, and school calendars which are specific to the regional/local seasonal needs.

Improve advocacy

Conduct a campaign on television and radio to highlight the importance of education for both girls and boys, and encourage parents to send their children, especially girls, to school.

Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism

A monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be established for the elimination of corrupt elements and practices in the education system, in order to make non-functional schools and literacy centres functional, particularly in remote, rural areas of the country.

Improve coordination

Conduct regular consultations with relevant departments, elected representatives, donors, civil society organizations and communities (including parents) to ensure the coordination of efforts to make the education system accessible to all and to meet the needs of students.

Ensure policies support equal opportunities for employment and equal wages

Take the necessary steps to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities in the labour market and receive equal pay for equal work.



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