

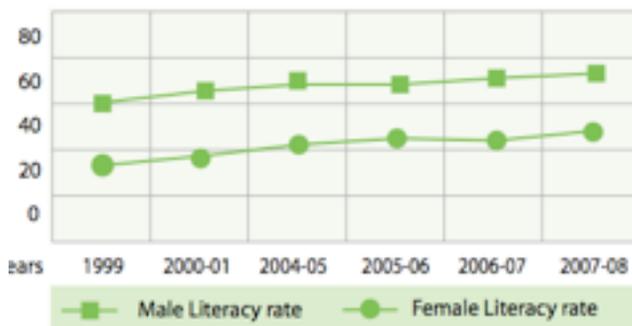
Education Access for Girls in Pakistan



Presently in Pakistan there is a great divide between the access to education between girls and boys. Although statistics vary by provinces within the country, the literacy and enrollment rates for women through the country are persistently and vastly lower than the rates for their male counterparts.

Impediments to Equal Educational Access

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



Source: PSUM Surveys.

Violence

The fighting in the north between Taliban militants and the Pakistani government is occurring predominantly in the regions of the North-West Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Currently, it is estimated that 2.5 million people have been displaced due to the violence and that the female illiteracy rate is 96% in the FATA and 72% in the North-West Frontier Province. The violence has led to the destruction of schools or the schools to be used as shelters.

2010 Flood

The devastation of the flood, which occurred in Pakistan in 2010, is also a factor, which further entrenched the poverty of regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan and increased the number of displaced people within the country. 20 million people were affected and 7 million of those people lost their homes and became displaced. The flood not only affected educational access by the effects of displacement, but many water sanitation systems were destroyed and now access to clean water and the health of the population are affected, created a new subset of problems which can further inhibit school attendance and educational access.

Displacement

The displacement factor has a two-fold effect. (1) The people of one region have to leave their homes due to the violence or flood. (2) The communities that then have to absorb those displaced people are then put under more of a strain. In the host communities, many of their schools are then used as shelters or as a place people can register for relief. The UN estimates that 1.2 million children in the region hosting displaced people are in need of educational services.

Rural vs. Urban

The issues of violence and the flood of 2010 have only exacerbated issues of educational access, which were already in existence in Pakistan. One primary factor on the access to education appears to be between the rural and urban environment. The literacy rates for Pakistani women living in urban areas are 5 times higher than for women living in rural areas.

In rural areas, the tradition of male dominance is more prevalent. However women in more upper and middle classes have greater access to education and employment opportunities, which grants them greater control over their life options.

In the rural areas poverty, cost of education, the burden of household labor, negative school environments and shortage and conditions of school facilities are all factors which influence the decision of parents to send their daughters to school or not. And if parents have to choose between sending a boy to school vs. a girl, the boy will be the one who will attend.

Educational Funding

According to the US in 1960 the expenditure was 1.1% of the GDP, which rose to 3.4% in 1990. In 2011 the Pakistani government organized a government commission to investigate the current educational situation. The commission declared that given the current circumstances, Pakistan has no chance of reaching their Millennium Development Goals for education by 2015, unless the

government doubles its present spending on education. At the time of the study (March 2011) The government spending on schools had been cut from 2.5% GDP in 2005 to 1.5%. The government also spends less in the rural regions where violence is prevalent; spending only \$11 per capita on development efforts in FATA compared the \$25 in the rest of the country.

The government commission found that: (1) 30,000 school buildings are so neglected they are dangerous, (2) 65% of schools have drinking water, 62% have latrines, 61% have a boundary wall and 39% have electricity. (3) 21,000 schools do not have a school building at all and (4) that there are 26 countries poorer than Pakistan who still managed to send more of their children to school.

Lack of governmental investment in the educational system is what has influenced the growth of private schools in the country, causing both an additional opportunity for educational access and yet a whole other set of disparities at the same time. The reliance on private education automatically excludes many people living in poverty because they would have to pay for either the tuition, the books or the transportation for their child to attend the private school. Hence, this allows for more access to the upper and middle class children, but not those living in poverty. In a region where a private school is the only option, many children, especially girls, may not be able to attend.

Domestic Action

Pakistan's constitution, outlined in 1973 also declares that, "the State shall... (b) remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education." A recent amendment has elaborated on educational rights by declaring free and compulsory education for all children from 5 to 16 years a fundamental right. It also states that all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection, that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone and guarantees that steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

Additionally Pakistan developed a National Plan of Action of Education for All which began in 2001 and be fully actualized by 2015. The objectives are to (1) promote community participation and ownership of basic education programs, (2) improve the quality of basic education, and (3) ensure access to education for disadvantaged rural and urban population groups, particularly girls and women.

In 2009 Pakistan approved a National Education Policy, which aims to overhaul the educational system based on the recognition of the disparities in access to education both in rural areas as well as by gender. This policy was enacted, as an attempt to get Pakistan on track to meet its Millennium Development Goals for the year 2015.

International Treaties and Declarations



Pakistan is signatory to many international treaties which support equal educational access for women and girls.

December 1948 Pakistan voted in favor of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, which states, “Everyone has the right to education,” and

“Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.

In 1979 the **Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** was adopted by the General Assembly. Although Pakistan didn’t sign the convention until 1996 they now are obligated to the conditions and expectations set forth by this convention, ensuring equality between the genders, including access to education.

The **Jomtien Declaration** created during a **World Conference on Education for All** in 1990 declares that every person should be able to benefit from educational opportunities and calls for universal access to education and the promotion of equality. Pakistan was one of the 155 signatories to this declaration.

The UN’s **Convention on the Rights of the Child** of 1989 also outlines the right to equality of educational access for both boys and girls that Pakistan has both signed and ratified.

During the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** in 1995, Pakistan committed to the advancement of women and to ensure that a gender perspectives is reflected in all policies and programs at all levels of the governments actions, nationally, regionally and internationally. Their declaration includes ensuring, “equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education.” (Article 30)

In 2000 Pakistan was one of 164 countries, which signed the **Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments**. This framework also sets the goal of 2015 as a benchmark to measure the educational outcomes of gender and demographic equality. It aims to eliminate gender discrimination and integrate strategies for gender equality in education recognizing the need for changes in attitudes values and practices within the educational systems.

In 2000, Pakistan participated in the **Millennium Declaration and Development Goals** during which the member states of the UN drew up eight goals as a response to improve the worlds main development challenges/ The second goal outlines was to, “Achieve universal primary education for both boys and girls by 2015.”



Recommendations

- The highest priority to combat these impediments to educational access for both boys and girls is that the government must increase government funding for schools. Even if they increased their spending to only 7- 10% of the GDP, the government could radically improve the conditions of their educational structure.
- More schools need to be built in more regions. In the rural areas where there are fewer schools more must be built. Schools must be established immediately in camps

for displaced people. This includes not only camps that currently exists and have no schools, but also any future camps which may be established as a result of future violence or disaster. In the case where no schools can be built, the government should send supports to the community to hold classes in homes or other potential meeting places.

- Money must be spent to improve schools that are in disrepair. Conditions of lack of drinking water, lack of bathrooms and lack of electricity must be repaired.

- The capacity of schools to absorb displaced boys and girls in host communities must be increased. Improved teacher training and allocating more funds to training and hiring teachers, especially in areas that are hosting displaced people.

This increase in government funding for schools will contribute to the goal of creating and making free primary education access to all citizens a reality.