GENDER JUSTICE AND EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Equity-Inclusion and Learning ASER 2018

Tracking Article 25-A and SDG 4

CONCEPT NOTE AND HUMAN INTEREST STORIES
GENDER JUSTICE AND EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

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Acknowledgement

The compilation and collection of human interest stories is a multi-team effort.

We are indebted to Oxfam for extending this opportunity to Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) for drafting this important work on girls’ education and gender justice. The basis of this work was the latest round of ASER Pakistan (rural) 2018 survey supported by UKAID and UNICEF. We are grateful to all development partners for enabling us to create benchmark datasets that provide the basis for transformative evidence based advocacy in Pakistan. We acknowledge the support provided by Zeeshan Siddique from Oxfam who facilitated the selection of districts.

We profoundly appreciate our team members across Pakistan namely Hafsa Alvi, Mumtaz Pirzada, Syed Tanzeem, Meha Pumbay, Sana Khan, Shakeel Khan, Waqas Bajwa, Waqas Imran, Sehar Saeed and Roha Batool who had put in their best efforts to collect stories from the field.

The time available to collect all the stories from such a geographical spread was short. The professional dedication with which the ITA staff achieved the set targets within tight time lines is commendable.
Message from Oxfam Country Director Pakistan

Gender justice and equal opportunities for young people are essential for a just world without poverty. Oxfam works within this theme to empower women and strengthen the voice of young people to achieve social change within their communities and become active citizens. We are proud to be associated with the programs that aim at transforming unequal power structures that impact women’s and girls’ rights and needs. Women and girls should have equal opportunities and should be able to fully enjoy their rights, free from all forms of violence and discrimination.

Women and girls make up more than half the world’s population. In poverty and crisis they regularly face discrimination, physical and sexual violence, lack healthcare and are often excluded from participation. Women’s rights and gender equality are fundamental human rights goals and cornerstones of achieving sustainable and fair development. Indeed, the world gets better as women expand their roles as political, economic, family and social leaders.

Together with different actors and institutions, our focus is on eliminating three major structural barriers for women’s development: the violation of women’s bodily integrity, the limited space for women’s participation in the public sphere and the restricted economic empowerment of women. Our work on gender justice in Pakistan reflect the same ideology and we take pleasure to be partnering with ITA to take this forward. ITA has not only looked deeper at the data gathered through ASER 2018 from a Gender Justice lens but also has highlighted the challenges of equity and exclusion by collecting powerful human interest stories. We are hopeful that these will create a bold reference for the new policies to be framed for creating gender justice.

Muhammad Qazilbash
Country Director
Oxfam Pakistan
Message from CEO ITA & Member Platform for Girls Education #LeaveNoGirlBehind

The report on Gender Justice and Education inspired from the ASER Pakistan 2018 (rural) evidence, could not have come at a better time. As a member of the Platform for Girls’ Education committed to the 12 recommendations for 12 years of Girls Education, it is vital that these human interest stories and district profiles presenting the flesh and blood of the challenges are disseminated far and wide to policy makers to take urgent action. Both within Pakistan at the provincial and federal levels, and globally there are important milestone events in 2019, an opportunity to advocate for #LeavingNoGirlBehind. At the country level, these include the finalization of the provincial education sector plans, the meetings of the Parliamentary Standing Committees on Education advocating strongly to remind the Prime Minister of Pakistan of his pledge to Education and removing barriers faced by girls to access quality education. Globally the opportunities include the upcoming G7 International Girls’ Education Conference, the UN High Level Political Forum in New York, and the SDGs Summit at UNGA in 2019. We, at ITA have hosted two round tables on this work, and will continue to promote and facilitate further activism on girls’ education, till every last girlchild is learning in Pakistan! DFID, UK AID, UNICEF and Oxfam have supported ASER 2019 and the human stories illustrating vividly the intersections of education and gender justice.

Baela Raza Jamil
CEO, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)
Preface

Right to education is more than access to a school, knowledge and skills leading to certificates, degrees and perhaps paid employment. It is a critical enabling power opening up many doors and spaces to access other rights including a range of civil and political as well as economic social and cultural rights. Conceptualized in this holistic manner, education acts as the fulcrum on which development turns and gender justice is embedded within state and society.

An example of how gender justice may be achieved through education is one I have experienced individually as well as part of my extended family and community. The lifelong struggle of our late mother, Begum Maroof Pirdad Khan and her passionate contribution to education in Swat is an example of how education and gender justice are inextricably linked. In 1953 the then Wali of Swat decided to set up a girls school in Saidu Sharif, and the person to call upon was our late mother, lovingly known in Swat as ‘Apa’. With her two year old daughter (that is me, now a sixty-four year old Professor of Law at Warwick University in the UK; former Professor of Law, Peshawar University, Pakistan) and our nanny Sakina, wrapped in her black burqa, this Convent educated graduate of Punjab University, set about her task of educating girls in the then Swat State. The richness and breadth of her legacy dawned upon her family when her students, now mostly retired academics, doctors, nurses and homemakers thronged to pay their respects when she passed away, each one recalling touching memories of Apa’s kind, inspirational and loving mentoring to women who were now grandmothers as well as successful women professionals. Facilitating access to education, ‘Apa’s’ untiring campaign and teaching as well as training the younger generation of teachers, percentage of girls’ education became one of the highest in KP (the NWFP as it was then called). This tireless effort also bore fruit and became evident when in the late 1999’s as Minister for Health in the KP, I noticed from official records that Swat domiciled women doctors were at the top of the women health professional list – both in seniority as well as in numbers!

Gender justice through the vehicle of education has and will bear fruit if approached in a holistic manner and ITA’s ground breaking work in making this a reality, is a significant contribution. Right to education is not simply a single right and entitlement – it is a multi-layered right that unlocks other rights and it is this that leads to gender justice. This report provides substance to the Platform for Girls Education; as Pakistan evidence mapped to human stories of struggle and urgency for Action!

I applaud the work of ITA in documenting the complex inter-linkages between education and gender justice and developing indicators to concretise ‘gender justice cards’. I am confident that this work will go from strength to strength and create positive impact, nationally and beyond.

Dr Shaheen Sardar Ali
Professor of Law, Warwick University
Advisor Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) Pakistan and ITACEC UK.
The Layout of the Study

Equity-Inclusion and Learning: ASER Pakistan 2018 & Gender Justice in Pakistan

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals 2030 are a set of all-encompassing milestones committed to a world that is equitable, inclusive and sustainable, to benefit ALL children, youth and adults without discrimination to sex, age, wealth, geography, disability, ethnicity, origin, migratory status, religion, or additional attributes. SDG 4 is a dedicated goal for education, with 7 targets, 3 means of implementation and 11 global indicators embedded in a sector wide approach and anchored in the principles of “Equity, Inclusion, Quality and Lifelong Learning” for sustainable lives. Such an interpretation of SDG 4 is the basis for achieving the other 16 goals to end poverty, health, nutrition, gender equality and social justice, climate change, environment, etc.

In Pakistan, provincial and federal governments are committed to the SDGs 2030 holistically. Furthermore, Article 25 A of the constitution is a fundamental right guaranteeing all children aged 5-16, free and compulsory education or 12 years of schooling without discrimination. Since 2010 all four provinces and federal capital territory have passed their respective legislation for 25 A (2012-17), but none have begun implementation, in spite of policies and provincial education sector plans being framed within 25 A and SDG 4, and thus 22.8 million (AEPAM 2017) children are still out of school!

Education conceived comprehensively as an equalizer to end gender inequality is critical for Pakistan, a country with the second largest number of girls’ out-of-school in the world after Nigeria. The Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) in primary education reveals that the ANER is 4% lower for girls than it is for boys (81% compared to 85%); at middle to higher secondary levels, ANER drops significantly to just 41% for girls (43% for boys). Thus 19% of girls are out-of-school at the primary level and 59% of girls are out-of-school at middle and higher secondary levels. This is an unacceptable reality!

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2016-2018 results also highlight disparities with respect to gender and wealth; gender inequalities affect the poorest more severely when facilities and services are not accessible. Adolescent girls are at greater risk of facing specific and disproportionalate challenges at puberty restricting them from access to schools if at a distance, learning and mobility compared to their brothers, and at risk of harmful customary practices, exploitation and violence in multiple forms.

The Right to Education Acts or article 25 A when completely implemented, will translate into protecting girls from denial of lack of opportunities/facilities to education, oppressive discrimination from worst forms of child labor, early marriages, poverty and other forms of exploitation that undermine rights of children generally, and girls especially.

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1 Pakistan Education Statistics 2016-17
ITA, and Oxfam ideated jointly and crafted a strand on “Gender Justice & Education” from ASER Pakistan 2018 rural data selecting 12 districts across Pakistan through a mixed methods approach, interfacing the quantitative indicators at the district/provincial level with case studies of the girl child. These stories highlight disadvantages faced by girls when denied their fundamental right to education due to lack of facilities, safe transport services to cover distances, spiralling oppressive customary practices, including unending household chores, child marriages, child abuse, denying multiple fundamental rights through routine traditions of gendered silence and acceptance. As stated by Oxfam, “gender inequality is the most serious and pervasive form of discrimination in the world”

ITA for the first time has looked deeper at the data gathered through ASER 2018 from a Gender Justice lens comprising of district report cards on selected gender indicators that highlight the challenges of equity and exclusion. These along with Human Interest Stories create a bold reference for the policy and action dialogues on the Gender Justice and Education.

These multiple layers of deprivation need urgent attention through interventions that do result in bold outcomes for girls demonstrating that deprivations must and can be offset by decision makers-through an integrated results-based implementation and accountability approach, impacting several SDGs and targets.

The mantra of ITA and its nationwide program ASER is that it is an active platform, from citizen led assessment to action! Today ASER has led to four action programs for girls education: i) Women Leaders of Tomorrow (WLT) a post primary scholarship program for girls (Oxfam) ii) Siyani Sahelian - Advance... a fast track program for out of school adolescent girls (9-19 years) for second chance opportunities to complete primary, middle and secondary education along with life skills, TVET and entrepreneurial skills (UK AID/DFID); iii) accelerated learning readiness program for girls and boys chalo parho barho (CPB/let’s read and grow) adopting teaching at the right level (TARL) approaches (Ilm Ideas 2) and, iv.) the Children’s Literature Festival (CLF) triggered by ASER findings as the largest learning festival across multiple intelligences since 2011. There are several iterations of these programs within ITA’s service delivery streams. www.aserpakistan.org

**Methodology of Districts & Selection**

12 districts were selected using the UNDP Human Development Report 2017 and its Human Development Index (HDI) on the basis of being more advanced and most deprived. The HDI is constructed by using national data sources and covering all the districts of Pakistan. Following the global methodology, Pakistan HDI is based on three dimensions: education, health and standard of living. The HDI’s Education Index is calculated using mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling at the district level from the 2014/15 Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) data. The Health Index is constructed using two indicators: immunisation rates and satisfaction.
with health facility taken from the PSLM data. Whereas, for the Standard of living index, the living standards from the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) as a proxy has been used. Higher value of HDI will mean higher development levels and a greater availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives while a low value will refer to vice versa. The districts have been selected through the following approach.

The districts below have been selected by keeping in mind the HDI values for each province (i.e. Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, KP Newly Merged Districts and Gilgit Baltistan). The selection of districts was finalized jointly by Oxfam and ITA.
The format of the report

The report’s layout contains the following:

- Human Interest Stories of the Girl Child challenged by gender justice followed by recommendations embedded.
- Interspersed with programs that counter gender justice operational under ITA’s program portfolio from ‘Assessment/Evidence to Action” through support of many partners such as Oxfam and DFID.
- 12 Recommendations from the Report: 12 Years of Quality Education for All Girls: A Commonwealth Perspective by Real Centre, University of Cambridge.
- Poem inspired by challenges of early marriages: Pinjre ki Maina by Rumana Hussain, Children Literature Festival.

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https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real/downloads/Platform%20for%20Girls/REAL%2012%20Years%20of%20Quality%20Education%20for%20Girls%20FULL%2084pp.pdf
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

SINDH
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

SAJAWAL

ASER PAKISTAN 2018 (RURAL)

GENDER JUSTICE REPORT CARD

SAJAWAL

HDI RANK
0.326

Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2017

SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Target 4.5 by 2030, Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

Target 4.1: By 2030, Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Article 25-A, Right to Education

The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of age 5-16 years in such a manner as may be determined by law.

LOW INDICATORS OF QUALITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS MEANS HIGHLY VULNERABLE GIRLS

EDUCATION

RURAL-URBAN

RELIGION

POVERTY

DISABILITY

CHILD MARRIAGES

Equity challenges for girls come at multiple intersections. The vicious cycle of deprivations needs to be broken by decision makers through an integrated results based approach leading to social and gender justice.

“Gender justice refers to many more women gaining power, and that both men and women benefitting from less restrictive gender roles”. (Oxfam, 2019)

Social Justice is about everyone having access to equal economic political and social rights and opportunities. Gender Justice is about entitlements and empowerment through capabilities and choice; it is the absence of discrimination between genders and disadvantaged groups with accountability (adapted from...
Gender gaps remain wide in 2018 (28%)

**LEARNING LEVELS (AGE 5-16)**

- Who can read at least sentences in Urdu/Sindhi: 38% male, 38% female
- Who can read at least words in English: 25% male, 16% female
- Who can do at least Subtraction: 36% male, 30% female

**GIRLS CONTINUE TO LAG BEHIND IN ENGLISH COMPETENCY!**

Target 4.1 of the SDG has committed that all children, regardless of background, should have access to free quality primary and secondary education. Target 4.5 specifically focuses on equity and aims to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training” (UNESCO, 2016a).

**PARENTAL EDUCATION**

- Mother: 21% completed primary education
- Father: 43% completed primary education

21% mothers have completed primary education.
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES
SAJAWAL

MOST DEPRIVED DISTRICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<td>Sajawal</td>
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PROFILE

Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT

Choices: How Sadia Chose Marriage Due to Lack of Educational Opportunities

Sadia was just 14 years old when she was married\(^3\), only to become a mother of a four year old at the age of 18. She dropped out of school after studying in first grade, due to a health threat in the village. She studied in Government Primary School Laikpur, a one hour walk from their village. There was no school in their village, which meant that girls had to walk for two hours every day to reach the school. Two residents of her village, who were on their way to school were bitten by wild dogs, and died of rabies within a few weeks. Since there is little or no awareness about vaccinations in the village, the residents did not know how to tackle this disease and left it to fate, resulting in the death of two young girls. Ever since this incident, Sadia’s father took all his children out of school, and left them at home to engage in daily household activities. Due to the lack of opportunities available to her, Sadia agreed to get married at the age of 14, her eyes still brimming with her thirst for education. She now longs for the life she once imagined for herself, and hopes that a primary school is

\(^3\) 12 million girls are globally married off who are under age. An unacceptable violation of basic rights! https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/what-is-the-impact/
established in her village so that her daughter does not experience the same fate as her.

The village Marhi in Sujawal resembled a typical village in Sindh, with houses made of mud and hay. It was surrounded by large sandy fields with little or no plants around. There was a main road connecting the village to other sandy fields, the same road which the girls used to attend school in other villages. Due to its open fields, it was common to see wild dogs on the way, as well as some reptiles such as snakes. Based on our conversations with the family, the following themes emerged:

i) **Health Threats to Young Girls in the Village:** During our visits to different villages across Sindh and Balochistan collecting case studies on gender justice and equity, we encountered a variety of issues which prevented girls from attending school such as transportation costs, customary practices, etc. but this was the first time we learnt that a health threat was preventing girls from attending school: the threat of rabies. Given that two girls had died of this disease, the community had a strong belief that sending girls to school was no longer safe, unless a school was not established nearby or these wild dogs were somehow removed by the authorities.

ii) **Lack of Choices Leading to Child Marriage:** Another important theme which emerged from this case study was how young girls, who drop out of school do not have many options to partake in other constructive activities/skills, and they often give in to the idea of marriage under pressure of families who seek security for girls through ‘early marriage’ when no choices are available for learning and support services. However, as many studies show, child marriages not only increase health risks, but also put these girls at the added risk of exposure to mental health issues, poverty and oftentimes violence by spouses and family members.

**Urgent Actions Needed**

This case study highlighted the dire need for education entitlements that must be delivered holistically in safe healthy environments.

1. There is an urgency to address health concerns in villages, provide primary health care awareness to residents about potential diseases, prevention and cure. The Lady Health Workers (LHWs) are already present in villages who can play a critical role for life skills awareness and support sessions.
2. The importance of vaccinations and provision of basic vaccinations free of cost at functional health facilities/units is critical for communities living in poor vulnerable spaces.

3. Access to schools (Primary/Secondary) is an entitlement only when they are close; but when schools are far, it is an opportunity lost, especially for girls. Without transport facilities and costs to cover access to education facilities, the burden of education and protection is impossible for poor families to manage.

If adequate steps are not taken, girls like Sadia will fall into the trap of early marriages; families see marriage as an ultimate “escape at the end of a bleak tunnel, but only as a bleaker space’. Sindh is the only province with a law and rules in place raising the age of marriage for girls to 18 years of age! We need to actively implement both the Sindh Free & Compulsory Education Act 2013 and the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017! Child marriages not only compromise multiple fundamental rights, loss of voice and sometimes even survival when young girls become mothers as children themselves!”
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES
SAJAWAL

**PROFILE**
Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

**CONTEXT**
In a small village in Laikpur, Sajawal, Seema sits on a chair, with the sewing machine in her lap stitching clothes for the siblings. She has completed her Matriculation and is appearing for her Intermediate exams privately. She studied till grade 7 in the village at the Government Middle School Laikpur, and then went to her aunt’s house in Sajawal, to attend a high school for girls far away from her village. After her Intermediate however, Seema will be at home, stitching clothes for her family and helping her mother with household chores since there are no prospects for higher education in the village.

Most of the family members in this village belong to the Syed cast, who are known for their strict religious values, especially regarding girls. For example, the mother informed us that in her days, girls were not allowed to get educated or go outside for work and were married at an early age. Although traditions are changing and the family members are now more progressive, the effects of these values are still present and females have a hard time attending school, especially if it is co-educational or has students from other villages. The conversations with the family highlighted the following themes:

i) **Accessibility Issues Surpass Family Values**

Although Syed families have strict codes of conduct in place with regards to female mobility, the family members informed us that if a higher education institution was present in the village for girls, the male

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*Figure 1  Salma Stitching Clothes for her Siblings. The family did not allow us to take her photograph since it is against their tradition*
members of the family would go and drop the girls themselves to that institution and be fully invested in their education. At the moment, the closest university is in Sajawal city, which is 1.5 hours away and is not only co-educational but has students from many different villages, which increases security risks for these girls and higher chances of harassment.

ii) Families progressive actions based on the resources available

Many families had left the village and shifted to nearby cities to ensure higher education for their children; however they could not afford to shift to distant cities. What they had done however was to send their girls to relatives homes to complete their Matriculation and Intermediate exams.

iii) No resources available for students with disabilities

One of the family members had two deaf children unable to hear or speak and did not attend school in the village. However, the mother informed that they urged the family to send them to school just like their cousins; the children wanted to get school bags and books. Despite their passion for education, the teachers in the village were not trained in sign language or skills to handle these students and hence they stayed at home.

iv) Teacher Quality is Low

Throughout the conversations, the family kept emphasizing that teacher quality in the village schools was low; they did not have the pedagogical content knowledge to teach the subjects. Teacher attendance was also an issue, and strict monitoring was evidenced in the village.

Urgent Actions Needed

Based on these findings, it is evident that families in this village are willing to send their girls to school if their family values are not being violated. Although the Syed families did not allow girls to pursue education in the past, they have slowly embraced the importance of education and are willing to educate them as long separate institutions/conditions for male and females are established. There is an urgency to address challenges of teacher quality to improve pedagogical content knowledge but also inclusive training to deal with students who are disabled and can be easily included in regular schools.

It is evident from this case study that in this particular village, there was awareness about the importance of education and willingness in parents to send their girls to school and college, but family reservations coupled with lack of higher education institutions made it difficult for them to do so.
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES
UMER KOT

ASER PAKISTAN 2018 (RURAL)

GENDER JUSTICE REPORT CARD

UMERKOT
HDI RANK
0.322
Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.3) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.
Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2017

SDG 4
QUALITY EDUCATION
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**PARENTAL EDUCATION**

- Mother: **25%**
- Father: **81%**

25% mothers have completed primary education
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

UMERKOT

PROFILE

Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT

The Case of Mehnaz – excellence snuffed out beyond middle school in Chor, Umerkot.

In the village near Chor, located near the Indian border in Umerkot, Pakistan, a child prodigy sits at home, holding a certificate she received for her outstanding performance in the annual Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) for grade 8. On this certificate of appreciation presented to Mehnaz in March 2017, the School Education and Literacy Department (SELD) “wishes her the best for her future education goals”. Little did they know, that within two years of achieving this honour, Mehnaz would have dropped out of school and sitting at home due to the absence of a high school for girls in the village. A child prodigy who failed to maximize her potential, Mehnaz can now be found sitting at home with the rest of her siblings, knitting clothes and longing for life she had once imagined for herself.

Context

Mehnaz studied at Government Middle School Tebhri Bhanhra, located near Chor Village in Umartot, Pakistan. In the middle of the Tharparkar desert, this school sets a prime example of a model school in the province, due to its exceptional school leadership. The school principal, Mr. Khalid Bhumbo sits in the office from 8 am to 2 pm, not only supervising the school but teaching classes due to the lack of teaching staff in the school. When the research team entered his office, he proudly showed them the school records, from leave

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applications to school finances which he has maintained ever since he joined the school. Under his supervision, the school has made significant progress, attracting many government officials including the former President Pervez Musharraf himself. Looking at his efforts and leadership qualities, there is no doubt that the school is fully capable of producing students like Mehnaz.

Residents of this village, including the school principal follow the famous Pir (spiritual leader) “Pir Pagara” known for his religious as well as political contributions. Under his commands, all men of the village have already been recruited by the Pakistan Army as a standby force for war; in case of a war between India and Pakistan; all men in this village have to go and fight. The Pir has also been a huge advocate for girls’ education, and encourages females to attend school and become independent. For this reason, all members of the community had enrolled their girls in schools. In this village, people were also aware about the benefits of education and had exposure to the world outside their village due to television; their standard of living was far better than other villages that we surveyed in Sindh. This is because majority of the residents worked for the Pakistan Army in some capacity or the other, and this area had received a lot of traction from politicians in the recent years due to its excellent academic records and its proximity to the Indian Border. Despite this popularity, the school only has two teachers who teach students from grade 1-8, through multi-grade teaching!

The case study highlighted the following trends.

i. **The Primary and Middle School Disparity**

Mehnaz has two siblings, one older sister who also dropped out of school a few years back and one younger sister who is still attending school. However, her siblings are not hopeful of the future, and know that they will experience the same fate as their sister. Their mother informed us that her daughter had topped every exam in her class, and that she had many dreams for her success. However, due to the absence of a high school for girls, Mehnaz had no choice but to sit at home relegated only to household chores. When asked about other options available, she told us that the nearest high school was located about 1.5 hours away, and the transportation costs make it difficult for students to attend that school. More importantly the high school has
students from 10-15 different villages and it is co-ed, which means that there is an added security risk with boys who come from other villages.

The girls informed us that while there was one middle school available in the area, there were 11 primary schools in the village, each having its own teachers and school building. Like many districts in Sindh, this district also had a similar trend of having more primary schools than middle and secondary/higher secondary schools, creating an imbalance in the education system.

ii. Lack of Female Role Models

The school principal informed us that he had made countless visits to the district education office and requested them to send teachers. However, no teacher was willing to relocate and settle in this area, with preference for other schools in the cities. There was an absence of female role models for the girls to look up to and Mehnaz had little support to study further.

The Way Forward: Social and Gender Justice

Once again like Sujawal, that parents in the rural community were willing to send their girls to school if a high school was present where the girls could finish their matriculation and intermediate studies. Given that the closest high school was 1.5 hour away, parents were not comfortable in sending their girls to a co-educational schools/colleges, interacting with boys from many different villages. The parents mentioned that if the high school was only for girls, they might have considered sending their girls to that school.

Urgent Actions Needed

a) a second chance program in this context; there are many such initiatives now available in Pakistan
b) transport facilities to be provided to girls especially to access secondary schools and
c) better planning for closer comprehensive facilities for education for all girls and boys from 5-16 years of age according to Article 25 A

Mehnaz now sits at home, still hopeful that the Government of Sindh will take notice and establish a high school in the area, to enable her to pursue her education according to the Sindh Free and Compulsory Education Act 2013 up to 16 years of age, achieving more milestones for learning and to improve her life. Mehnaz awaits for that day when her dreams will be fulfilled!
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

THARPARKAR

PROFILE
Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT
All Promises and Nothing Delivered: The vicious Cycle of Poverty in Thar

In a typical Tharparkar village, education prospects for girls are deplorable, with no school in sight. The houses are made of hay and sand in a traditional fashion, and the women wear traditional clothing. As soon as we entered the village, the residents gathered around us, curious to know if we were from the Benazir Income Support Program or similar welfare programs to improve their living conditions. It was obvious that these villagers were frequently visited by politicians who had made numerous promises, and they were sitting here waiting for them to visit again. When we informed her about our organization and we were here to “survey”, they got excited, and wanted to take us around the village and show their houses, as well as the issues they were facing. In this group, we came across a girl, who was around 10-12 years of age, wearing traditional colorful Thari clothes. She looked extremely weak, and it was obvious that she was not getting adequate nourishment. Her name was Dia, and she had never attended school because there was no school in the vicinity. In this village of Tharparkar, the future for girls like Dia looked extremely bleak, as they are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty without access to educational opportunities to break this grim cycle.

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<td>Tharparkar</td>
<td>Sindh</td>
<td>0.326</td>
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During our conversations with the family, the following themes emerged:

i) Accessibility Issues

When we inquired about the status of education in the village, it transpired that there was no school nearby making it difficult for both boys and girls to attend school. Given that villages in Tharparkar had received a lot of attention in the recent years due to companies being set up for coal mining, energy and other industry, it was observed that everyone in the village was aware of the importance of education and were willing to send their children to school if one did become available in the vicinity; however, they were not comfortable in sending their children for schooling outside the village due to security threats.

ii) Health Issues and Rampant Child Mortality

During our visits to different households, there was ample evidence of villagers being bed-ridden due to common diseases/accidents. For example, a women told us that her husband met with an accident a few months back, broke his leg and was now bed-ridden because they could not afford to take him to the hospital. The team was a witness to him lying in bed with a loose bandage on his leg, swollen from all sides. It was extremely tragic to see an earning member of the family bed-ridden due to a common, curable illness.

Dia’s family informed that child mortality in this village was high, as well as miscarriages. This was due to malnutrition; the children and mothers were malnourished which often resulted in early infections, lack of basic health facilities and deaths.

iii) All Promises and Nothing Delivered: Extreme Poverty

The residents of the village were used to politicians coming in and making big promises; prominent political leaders had visited them, but failed to deliver.

Dia’s family was living in extreme poverty and did not have enough funds to afford basic necessities such as food, clothes and water. Dia’s father, like many other men in the village worked as a farmer, and her mother stayed at home to take care of the children, prepare food and do household chores.

Urgent Actions Needed

Given the current situation in this village, prospects of the district, there is an urgency to be bold and track where all the funds for these villages are going? Despite the media hype on developments in Tharparkar the visits to villages like these, there is a realization that the announcements on development cannot be generalized to all! Girls such as Dia are living in extreme poverty and have no means to break this vicious cycle. Women in this village are also malnourished, which threatens not only their own health but the health of their children jeopardizing their lives with inadequate nourishment and care.
This village needs urgent attention for an all rounded focus on education, health and nutrition facilities as well as poverty reduction social safety net programs such as the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) initiatives.
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

KARACHI

ASER PAKISTAN 2018 (RURAL)

GENDER JUSTICE REPORT CARD

KARACHI

HDI RANK 0.854
Higher value of HDI (closer to 1) means higher development levels and a greater availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.
Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2017

SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Target 4.5 by 2030, Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

Target 4.1: By 2030, Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Article 25-A, Right to Education
The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of age 5-16 years in such a manner as may be determined by law.

LOW INDICATORS OF QUALITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS MEANS HIGHLY VULNERABLE GIRLS

EDUCATION
RURAL-URBAN
RELIGION
POVERTY
DISABILITY
CHILD MARRIAGES

Equity challenges for girls come at multiple intersections. The vicious cycle of deprivations needs to be broken by decision makers through an integrated results-based approach leading to social and gender justice.
“Gender justice refers to many more women gaining power, and that both men and women benefitting from less restrictive gender roles”. (Oxfam, 2019)

Social Justice is about everyone having access to equal economic political and social rights and opportunities. Gender Justice is about entitlements and empowerment through capabilities and choice; it is the absence of discrimination between genders and disadvantaged groups with accountability (adapted from...
ENROLLMENT (6-16) YEARS

Gender Gap

07% 10%

% of Out of School Children

Govt. Schools

43% 57%
Pvt. Schools

36% 64%

Gender gaps remain wide in 2018 (17%)

LEARNING LEVELS (AGE 5-16)

Who can read at least sentences in Urdu/Sindhi

27% 25%

Who can read at least words in English

26% 24%

Who can at least do Subtraction

45% 35%

GIRLS CONTINUE TO LAG BEHIND IN SUBTRACTION!

Target 4.1 of the SDG has committed that all children, regardless of background, should have access to free quality primary and secondary education. Target 4.5 specifically focuses on equity and aims to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training” (UNESCO, 2016a).

PARENTAL EDUCATION

Mother 35%
Father 50%

35% mothers have completed primary education
**HUMAN INTEREST STORIES**

**KARACHI**

### Profile
High value of HDI (closer to 1) means higher development levels and more availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

### Context
In the largest mega city slum of Karachi, the future of Asifa looks gloomy. Her parents recently got divorced, and her father was known to be abusive towards her mother; she was threatened with him coming after her and claiming her custody anytime. For these reasons, Asifa found it difficult to concentrate on her lessons, and now she seldom goes to school. Asifa is a textbook case study of ‘At Risk Child in School”. The team visited her house in the evening, which was located in a small semi-rural community in Karachi. The houses were made of mud, and the survey team passed by narrow streets flooded with motorcycles and children to reach their house. Inside her home sitting in a small room, devoid of any furniture the team sat on straw mats on the floor and were greeted by Asifa and her mother.

Asifa looked older for her grade level, and upon inquiring her age it was revealed that she was 10 years old, studying in grade 3. She was older than all her classmates, and had witnessed far more traumas in life than anyone her age. Her education began in the village school from where she had to drop out when her relatives started having issues with her attending school. She moved to Karachi with her family, now older and re-joined a primary school.

During our conversations with Asifa, the following themes emerged:

i) **Lack of a social support system in urban areas**: Both Asifa and her mother live alone after their father left them, and have little or no social security. Since they depended on Asifa’s father for income, they have to find opportunities themselves.

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**MOST DEPRIVED DISTRICT**

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ii) **Poverty:** Both Asifa and her mother live in extreme poverty, and had to move out of the house they previously lived in. They have now moved into Asifa’s maternal grandmother’s house. However, they may have to shift out of the house soon after their uncle comes back to Karachi, anxiety driven about looking for a suitable place to stay more permanently but without resources.

iii) **Little or no prospects for further study:** Asifa’s mother was already having a hard time sending her to school instead of placing her as a “house maid” and earn desperate money for the family. She clearly did not see the long-term benefits of getting a good education, going through financial crises.

iv) **No role models:** No females in Asifa’s family had studied after primary school and she would be the first one to do so. However, given their financial conditions and the constant security threats they faced from her father, her mother was reluctant to send her to school every day, which was a 10 minute walk from the house.

**The Way Forward: Recommendations and Conclusions**

In urban sprawling mega cities like Karachi, where income inequality is rampant with little family support, demand for child labor remains high, as a cheaper form employment in households. In addition to carrying out the usual household chores, these children are hired as babysitters and other grueling chores preferred over older women and men since they can “play with their children” at low wages. In this culture of child domestic labor, with no formal implementation of the Sindh Free and Compulsory Education Act 2014, it is no surprise that given the vulnerable conditions, Asifa’s mother feels free to place her daughter in one of these households for a living.

**Urgent Actions Needed**

In these contexts, it is not only important to have strict child labor laws and implementation of 25 A (2014 Act) but also ensure that children such as Asifa and her mother are targeted for social safety net support programs to stabilize family incomes. Asifa as a highly at risk in school student, at the verge of dropping out due to complex domestic conditions belongs to a group of girls in need of a second chance program on education, life skills and technical vocational skills once she is in her teens for better support to livelihoods.
INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS FOR GIRLS EDUCATION TOWARDS GENDER JUSTICE

Interventions for out of school girls’ education through accelerated learning readiness (6-12); second chance post primary and scholarship programs for out of school adolescents demonstrate tremendous promise for scaled up replications supported by UKAID & OXFAM.

From Assessment to Action:
• Siyan Saheli (A Second Chance Program for Adolescent Girls): In South Punjab -22000-25000 girls

Overall Objective:
Empowering out of school adolescent girls in South Punjab (Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalpur and Muzaffargarh) through post primary opportunities for learning gains, TVET, livelihoods and life skills.

Target Beneficiaries:
Drop out (aged 9-19): girls who had limited access to formal education - perhaps due to disability, ethnicity or castes and their responsibilities may be multiple in extended family care.

Never enrolled (aged 12-19): most vulnerable girls who have never had access to formal school because of displacements, emergencies and even feuds/conflicts. Activities and support services for this category will include functional literacy/numeracy intervention, skills and livelihood, financial inclusion with market linkages.

Key Strands:
• Remedial /accelerated learning/bridge programs
• Skills, livelihoods and financial literacy
• Life Skills Based Education
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

BALOCHISTAN
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES
LASBELA

GENDER JUSTICE REPORT CARD

LASBELA
HDI RANK
0.301
Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower
development levels and lesser availability of
opportunities and freedom of choice for people to
enhance their lives.
Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2017

SDG 4
QUALITY EDUCATION
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education
and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Target 4.5 by 2030, Eliminate
gender disparities in education
and ensure equal access to all
levels of education and
vocational training for the
vulnerable, including persons
with disabilities, indigenous
peoples, and children in
vulnerable situations
Target 4.1 By 2030, Ensure that
all girls and boys complete free,
equitable and quality primary
and secondary education
leading to relevant and effective
learning outcomes

LOW INDICATORS OF QUALITY, EQUITY, AND
ACCESS MEANS HIGHLY VULNERABLE GIRLS

EDUCATION
RURAL-URBAN
RELIGION
POVERTY
DISABILITY
CHILD MARRIAGES

Equity challenges for girls come at multiple intersections. The vicious cycle of
deprivations needs to be broken by decision makers through an integrated
results-based approach leading to social and gender justice.
“Gender justice refers to many more women gaining power, and that both
men and women benefitting from less restrictive gender roles”. (Oxfam, 2019)

Social Justice is about everyone having access to equal economic political and
social rights and opportunities. Gender Justice is about entitlements and
empowerment through capabilities and choice; it is the absence of discrimination
between genders and disadvantaged groups with accountability (adapted from...
Gender gaps remain wide in 2018 (27%)

**LEARNING LEVELS (AGE 5-16)**

- Who can read at least sentences in Urdu: 39% female, 05% male
- Who can read at least words in English: 34% female, 02% male
- Who can at least do Subtraction: 59% female, 18% male

**GIRLS CONTINUE TO LAG BEHIND!**
Target 4.1 of the SDG has committed that all children, regardless of background, should have access to free quality primary and secondary education. Target 4.5 specifically focuses on equity and aims to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training” (UNESCO, 2016a).

**PARENTAL EDUCATION**

- Mother: 19%
- Father: 41%

19% mothers have completed primary education.
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

LASBELA

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PROFILE

Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT

Empowerment in Entrepreneurship: a Remote Village in Lasbela Balochistan

In a small village in Kolai, Lasbela Balochistan, women are setting examples of empowerment by engaging in entrepreneurship, despite gender challenges faced on a daily basis. One such example is shown by a family in Kolai, consisting of four members including Afiya (mother), Aslam (father) and their two girls Sumaiya and Sarah, 9 and 13 years old respectively. Sumaiya and Sarah both attend school and study in grades 2 and 3. In a normal school setting, Sarah should be studying in grade 8, whereas Sumaiya should be attending grade four but they are both behind in enrolment, since the primary school was recently constructed in the village. With enrolment delays, Sarah is already 5 years behind in learning milestones, if she were to be studying at grade level in the current school, whereas Sumaiya is 2 years behind. By the time she reaches Matriculation, Sarah is going to be 18 years old, and will face added pressures of marriage from the community/family and risks of harassment and security in her daily mobility routines. Adding to this misery, there is an absence of a middle or secondary/high school for girls, which means that there are few incentives for these girls to continue school. Occupations in the villages are limited as are the basic healthcare facilities, with little or no support from social welfare programs. In this small village of Balochistan, these two girls face setbacks from all sides, and this case study will highlight how their mother is playing a strong role in not only advocating for their right to education but also running the entire household on her own.

Kolai village in Balochistan is located in the Hub Tehsil in Lasbela, Balochistan. In this village, living conditions are far from favorable, and income disparities are evident as soon as one enters the village. The village represents the typical Balochistan landscape, rugged terrain surrounded by dry low mountain ranges from all sides. The houses are made of sand and covered with hay to keep them cool in the summers. The first thing one notices as soon as one enters the village is the variation in materials used to construct the houses; families with a steady source of income had relatively “pukkay” /solid houses,
whereas those who did not have a steady income had constructed makeshift houses with mud and wood.

Upon reaching the village the survey team was taken to a pucca house, which had one room and one bathroom. The kitchen was located in another location, which was typical of the villages located in the area. We were greeted by the girls, Sumaiya and Sarah and their mother Afiya. Their father was lying down in the same room, and was sleeping. Both girls had their heads covered, and their mother had taken a veil on her face due to the presence of some other men outside the room, indicating that they were Muslim. Sumaiya and Sarah could not communicate in Urdu, and only knew some basic words. Sadly the medium of instruction is Urdu in Balochistan! For this reason, a family friend from the village helped us in translation. The following themes encapsulate our experience:

The Koloi Village

ii. Women Economic Empowerment and Participation

Upon inquiring about female activities in the household sources of income, the mother “Afiya” informed the team that she was single-handedly running the household since the past few years. Her husband was unemployed due to the outbreak of measles in the village. Previously, he used to do woodwork but could no longer do so because of ill-health. Afiya shared that she stitched traditional Balochi clothes for a living which were then sold in the city for over Rs. 3000-4000. However, this source of income was uncertain and sometimes it would take months for the money to reach her due to delays in distribution. Despite being financially independent, Afiya was not actively engaging with the public; men were mostly present in public spaces while Afiya was expected to stay inside the house.

Learning Levels

Afiya’s daughters only started going to school three years ago when a school was finally established in the area. When asked to read some basic words
in Urdu, English as well as solve some word problems in Mathematics. The girls were successful in reading basic English sight words such as “the, far, and big” and were also able to do basic addition/subtraction. The school in their area “Government Girls Primary School Kolai Goth” is a primary school and had classes up to grade 5. Due to availability of only a single teacher, it operates as a multi-grade school were the teacher from their community taught all grades. The boys’ school in the same vicinity had classes up to grade 8, and the family informed us that they would not have any issues in adjusting girls in the same school as well; in fact they want their girls to remain in education as long as the school was located nearby or transportation was provided. However, their mother shared that buying simple writing notebooks for these girls was extremely expensive for them and the school did not provide them with basic stationary. Although books are provided for the students, most of the time these books are short in supply and sometimes take months to reach the school.

**ii. Income Disparities**

According to the Human Development Index report, most districts in Balochistan rank from low to very low levels of human development. This was evident in the resources which were available to the residents of this village. During our visit, the team observed that none of the houses had vehicles, and only a few had motorbikes available for transport. For men, the occupations included wood-cutting, fruit selling, fishing or setting up a shop in the village; no other options for earning were available to the men in the village. For men who were unable to work, their wives ran the household by stitching traditional Balochi clothes. These sources of income did not promise them growth, and they could only earn a limited amount through these occupations; which meant that poverty was intergenerational. There was no indication of social service programs such as BISP reaching the village.

**iii. Health**

It was sad to see the father of these girls wrapped in a thin blanket, covered with persistent measles with a pack of medicines on his side. The room was also full of hissing flies. There was no clinic or hospital near the village, which meant that the family had to spend precious resources on transport to reach the hospital and were restricted in emergencies. His situation was deteriorating day by day and the residents of the village did not have enough knowledge about measles and how they can cure it in the right manner. The girls were also staying in close proximity with the father, despite the risks involved re-confirming graphically the low MPI/HDI in the province.
Social & Gender Justice: The Way Forward

From conversations with the family one deduced that it was common for women in these villages to earn on behalf of the family in case the husband was unable to do so, which was a positive step towards female empowerment, but at a steep cost. Social justice challenges are present, both for men and women; but women bear the burden of collective and individual deprivation in villages like Kolai. The women requested sewing machines; their availability would help them boost their trade in Balochi clothes. Within their own local context, gender justice is negotiated through a positive prism, the family did not express any reservation for the girls to attend middle school with the boys if an alternate solution was not found; they said they wanted to make sure their girls get educated. Household costs for schooling did matter to the family given that they are dependent on only one source of income which is usually unsteady and the school should be given additional resources to provide these materials to children. Lastly, the mother emphasized that it gets extremely difficult for one teacher to manage all classrooms and that more teachers need to be provided by the government to ensure learning levels are maximized for children.

Contrary to the common beliefs, parents of these girls were progressively inclined towards girls education, nor did they have any problems with these girls attending co-ed school in case another middle school was not available. The men in the family were reasonably proud of their wives running the household, and did not express any concerns over doing so; or was it just gender inertia and convenience? Empowerment has a very different meaning in every context- women learn to adjust to ground realities and hold the burden of family survival and growth. Although women in this village were not seen participating in public spaces and had to observe the “purdah”, their definition of empowerment was crafted within restricted cultural values and customs; such as running the household and taking bold steps to send their girls to school despite the obstacles. Notions of gender justice are clearly a local affair at great costs and burden to women and girls.

Urgent Actions Needed

There is a desperate need for health facilities in the village and vocational training programs for both women and men to improve their livelihoods. In Kolai, while parents were willing to send their daughters to school, lack of middle and high schools for girls in the vicinity was a major deterring factor and with their limited income levels, transportation costs for post primary education were impossible. The girls are already behind grade level and as they grow older, they will face added risks of harassment, security and pressure of marriage from the community. Policy makers must rise to the gender justice challenges as fundamental rights to be extended; these need urgent attention if Article 25 A for ALL children 5-16 has to be achieved as a
state obligation. **Innovative solutions backed by resources need to be found by the government** for their most vulnerable communities of Kolai Lasbella to tackle accessibility and learning gains such as **double shift middle school**, **with adequate teachers and facilities** in place so that Sarah is not sacrificed to the altar of child marriage.
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

QUETTA

GENDER JUSTICE REPORT CARD

QUETTA
HD1 RANK
0.664

Higher value of HDI (closer to 1) means higher development levels and a greater availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2017

SDG 4
QUALITY EDUCATION

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LOW INDICATORS OF QUALITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS MEANS HIGHLY VULNERABLE GIRLS

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ENROLLMENT (6-16) YEARS

Gender Gap

21% 12%

% of Out of School Children

Govt. Schools

35% 65%

Pvt. Schools

37% 63%

Gender gaps remain wide in 2018 (33%)

LEARNING LEVELS (AGE 5-16)

Who can read at least sentences in Urdu/Pashto

♂ 41% ♀ 28%

Who can read at least Words in English

♂ 33% ♀ 20%

Who can at least do Subtraction

♂ 51% ♀ 40%

GIRLS CONTINUE TO LAG BEHIND!

Target 4.1 of the SDG has committed that all children, regardless of background, should have access to free quality primary and secondary education. Target 4.5 specifically focuses on equity and aims to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training” (UNESCO, 2016a).

PARENTAL EDUCATION

♀ Mother 22% ♂ Father 36%

22% mothers have completed primary education
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

Quetta

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PROFILE
High value of HDI (closer to 1) means higher development levels and more availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT
Kotwal is a small village outside Quetta, Balochistan, mostly populated by people of Pashtun ethnicity. The village has vast, open and dry landscapes, outlined by Rocky Mountains, including the impressive mountain ranges of Koh-i-Takatu, Koh-i-Murdaar and Koh-i-Chiltan. Kotwal is etched with a network of semi-paved roads. Multiple modes of transportation can be seen; some villagers travel via donkey carts, while others have motorbikes and cars. Auto rickshaws are also used to commute within and around the city. The buildings in Kotwal are either mud-based structures, unlined brick walls or cemented and painted constructions. There is a lack of proper disposal of sewerage and litter, as heaps of waste are seen lining the streets. There are many local businesses propped up around the village, including fruit and vegetable vendors, auto repair shops, health clinics, stationary shops, barbers, grocery shops, small restaurants etc. Many women make handicrafts at home, supplied to the city markets.
'Too Old,’ Too Soon: The Story of Saima

We were greeted at the door by Rifla, roughly in her thirties, wearing balochi shalwar kameez, holding a toddler tightly to her hip. She expressed that she didn’t understand Urdu, but motioned for us to follow her into the house. Once inside, we walked down a narrow cemented and roofed passage that led to an open space, surrounded by rooms on all sides. Here, Rifla called out to someone in Pashto, presumably to come and entertain the ‘guests’. This was a colorful home; it was cemented, and painted in vibrant hues of purple, blue and yellow. Birdcages were suspended along one side of the room, and colorful traditional clothing was hung to dry on the other side.

Inside Saima’s home

Soon, we were greeted by Saima, a 12 year old girl; her hands and feet dyed red with henna. Saima was very friendly, with confidence well beyond her years. She wore large sparkling rings on her fingers, and numerous glittering glass bangles on her wrists, sporting an intricately embroidered dupatta over her head and shoulders. She has 8 sisters and 2 brothers; 4 of her eldest sisters were married around the age of 14. “We live in this house with 5 of our uncles, their wives and children,” she said. Her father is an electrician and, like her uncles, has a shop in the village. The women in the household are not involved in monetary activities; many of the girls are married to their cousins living in the same house.

Listening to Saima’s story, it was clear that the lack of girls’ Education, in this context, is a multi-faceted issue:

i) Conditions of Schooling

Saima went to school and then dropped out when she was ‘old enough’. She was enrolled in class 5 and enjoyed studying and practicing Mathematics. She didn’t like going to school because teachers repeatedly physically abused students, and books were not provided for free, even though, it was a government institution. Gradually,
most of her classmates dropped out as well. About 200 girls were enrolled in the school, which had 6 rooms, electricity and drinking water. Saima proudly stated that she was the best student of Mathematics in her class. 2 of her sisters are in class 1 and 4, and they also report regular corporal punishment in school. Laiba, Saima’s younger sister, asserted that barely anything is taught in school; most of the syllabus is given as homework, and students are punished if their learning levels are not at par. “Teachers spend most of their time chatting amongst each other and sipping tea,” she added in frustration. In such a school environment, children’s’ motivation to go to school plummets.

**ii) An Intersectional Lens: Gender and Age**

Every morning, Saima helps her sisters and cousins in preparing breakfast for children and male members of the household. She serves tea to her younger siblings who are still enrolled in school. Once the children leave for school and adult men go to work, Saima assists in cleaning the house and cooking. “I look after the chickens and parrots in the house, but I don’t enjoy it,” Saima said with a laugh. Saima’s older brother has been going to school since many years; he studies in class 10 and is soon appearing in Matriculation examinations. The younger children in the house play together after school, however, when about 6+ years of age, girls begin to have a lot of household responsibilities and no longer have time to play.

It is evident that power dynamics, in this socioeconomic milieu, are functional at multiple layers. The gender dimension is evident: as a girl, Saima’s Education is not a priority, and her gendered role in the household takes over. In addition, at 12 years of age, Saima finds herself ‘too old’ to go to school, looking after younger children because they need to be cared for, and elders, because they must be respected. Saima does not have the luxury to enjoy her childhood or go to school.

**Women in the Public Sphere**

Saima enjoys putting on henna and wearing bangles. Since she is not allowed to leave the house, her father brings henna and jewelry for her. “Twice every year, he also brings home new dresses to wear for Eid,” she added, her eyes glittering with excitement. Saima’s sisters and cousins stitch clothes for themselves and their relatives. She used to fantasize about becoming a doctor one day, but her relatives don’t allow it. She explained that her extended family would disapprove if she leaves the house; no woman in her family has ever worked outside the home; it’s not an option.

Another evident trend is the absence of women’s participation from the public sphere. Saima’s story shows how women are discouraged to leave the house for a variety of practical needs (shopping, Education, work etc.). In such conditions, girls’ perception of agency and capacity suffers; their hopes and ambitions are stifled, perpetuating inter-generational unlettered and silenced socially deprived roles!
Urgent Actions Needed

Better Governance in Government Schools is urgently needed to ensure that government rules are being clearly followed with no extra costs being taken from households/children when facilities and books are free of cost.

Teachers’ Training on Content, Rules and Attitudes: Teachers are clearly in need of training for capacity on content and pedagogy and implementing a code of conduct with respect to corporal punishment and child abuse which are clear violations.

Second Chance Opportunities for Saima: There is an urgency for second chance opportunities for Saima through catch up programs in academics, life skills and TVET

Awareness programs on importance of Girls Education -and Right to Education Act 2014 are clearly the need of the hour once the facilities for learning are in place.
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

PUNJAB
RAJANPUR
HDl RANK 0.506
Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.
Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2017

SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Target 4.5 by 2030, Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations
Target 4.1: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Article 25-A, Right to Education
The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of age 5-16 years in such a manner as may be determined by law.

LOW INDICATORS OF QUALITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS MEANS HIGHLY VULNERABLE GIRLS

EDUCATION
RURAL-URBAN
RELIGION
POVERTY
DISABILITY
CHILD MARRIAGES

Equity challenges for girls come at multiple intersections. The vicious cycle of deprivations needs to be broken by decision makers through an integrated results-based approach leading to social and gender justice. “Gender justice refers to many more women gaining power, and that both men and women benefitting from less restrictive gender roles”. (Oxfam, 2019)

Social Justice is about everyone having access to equal economic political and social rights and opportunities. Gender Justice is about entitlements and empowerment through capabilities and choice; it is the absence of discrimination between genders and disadvantaged groups with accountability (adapted from...
Gender gaps remain wide in 2018 (24%)

LEARNING LEVELS (AGE 5-16)

- Who can read at least sentences in Urdu: 20% (male) vs. 13% (female)
- Who can read at least words in English: 19% (male) vs. 10% (female)
- Who can at least do Subtraction: 16% (male) vs. 10% (female)

GIRLS CONTINUE TO LAG BEHIND!
Target 4.1 of the SDG has committed that all children, regardless of background, should have access to free quality primary and secondary education. Target 4.5 specifically focuses on equity and aims to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training” (UNESCO, 2016a).

PARENTAL EDUCATION

- 6% mothers have completed primary education
- 18% fathers have completed primary education
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

RAJANPUR

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MOST DEPRIVED DISTRICT</th>
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PROFILE

Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT

Rajanpur District, situated on the right bank (west side) of River Indus, is one of the least developed districts of Punjab with poor scores on the Human Development Index. It is bounded on the north by Dera Ghazi Khan District, Punjab, to the west by Dera Bugti district of Balochistan, to the east by Muzaffargarh and Rahim Yar Khan district/Punjab, on the south lies Kashmore district in Sindh. Amidst rich ethnic diversity, Rajanpur’s economy is predominantly agrarian, with women usually found to be working and associated with crop sowing and harvesting.

Roghan, a rural village in Rajanpur, is where we locate the origins of Aasiya’s story. A dilapidated mud house stood on the corner of the street with one room to host her family of seven. Her father is blind, her mother works in the fields making minimal wage to feed her entire family. Aasiya, 9 years old, has no choice but to stay at home and look after her siblings, with two younger sisters and two younger brothers.

Hopes, Dreams and Chronic Poverty: The Story of Aasiya and Saeeda Mai

Saeeda Mai, Aasiya mother, shared her own story of child marriage, with five children from 9 years to 2 year old, with no education but only bewildered eyes and body working in the field from early morning every day. After her husband met an accident, she had no other opportunity other than working in the field leaving her children behind. Being a drop out herself, she always wanted her children to learn and to be enrolled in school. She feels pity for herself where she can’t do anything better because of not even completing primary schooling, and feels even worse knowing the fact that the future of her daughters will be nothing different.

Aasiya used to go to school till she was 7 years old. There used to be only one primary school in Roghan with no boundary walls. Many parents in the vicinity did not send their daughters but only sons, to school but Aasiya was one of the few whose mother used to drop her every day.

She always wanted to become a teacher. Often, she used to gather other girls in the street and play teacher-student game with them, taking up the role of
a teacher herself. The school where she used to go had hardly a functional room, still her mother hoped that Aasiya will turn out to be a good student and will complete her education by all means.

An Intersectional Lens: Gender and Age

Aasiya’s and her mother’s dreams were shattered when all of a sudden Aasiya’s father lost his sight. Childhood is envisioned as a beautiful period in a person’s life, where one spends their time playing with friends, sharing stories and spending time wandering around in the village with innocent and minimal expectations. Aasiya’s childhood, on the other hand, burdened her instead with a rush of responsibilities, giving up on school and looking after the home with her siblings.

Every morning, Aasiya helps her mother in preparing breakfast for her family. While her mother is away for work, she cleans the house, does laundry and looks after her father and her younger siblings. Her younger brother is only 2 years old and no one goes to school because they simply cannot. She has completed her education till class 2 only, but now she sits at home with no clear life path or goal to work towards as a surrogate mother of many. “I really liked to play Teacher- Student game with other girls but it’s been years that I have not played. I barely can leave the house because my mother is away for most of the day. I sometimes go to the field though.”

Many girls around her are also not going to school, because of numerous reasons but poverty comes out more strongly than others. Families who can afford in Roghan, prefer boys to be sent to school. Poor girls are more than twice as likely to be married off in childhood than those who are wealthy. Once married, they face potentially life-threatening risks from early pregnancy, and often lose the opportunity of an education and a better income. Their poverty becomes a self-sustaining vicious cycle. ASER Results (2012-2016) also highlight that poorer girls face greater disadvantage in terms of getting enrolled in schools than richest girls and even poorer boys. If our objective is to educate all children, we need to challenge the existing differences and disparities in order to provide equal set of opportunities to all children of the society. Failure to address such structural disparities linked to wealth, gender, ethnicity, language, disability and other markers of disadvantage will hold back our progress towards SDG’s and fuelling wider processes of social exclusion. Many Aasiyas will be left behind in this struggle and will lose their future forever!
Urgent Actions Needed

- Support to Asiya’s home through social safety net instruments viz. the Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA) and Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) to offset extreme poverty and disability at home.
- Improvement in missing facilities at school as is evident in Punjab - ensuring all schools that are still depleted in Rajanpur are improved on a priority basis.
- A linkage of Social Safety Net programs at the school level for referral and off setting of financial crises of the most vulnerable children such as those faced by Asiya leading to her early drop out.
- Second Chance Programs for girls like Aasiya - ensuring she can be in a catch up program after negotiation with her mother on timings.
LOW INDICATORS OF QUALITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS MEANS HIGHLY VULNERABLE GIRLS

EDUCATION

RURAL-URBAN

RELIGION

POVERTY

DISABILITY

CHILD MARRIAGES

Equity challenges for girls come at multiple intersections. The vicious cycle of deprivations needs to be broken by decision makers-through an integrated results-based approach leading to social and gender justice. “Gender justice refers to many more women gaining power, and that both men and women benefitting from less restrictive gender roles”. (Oxfam, 2019)

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Gender gaps remain wide in 2018 (11%)

**LEARNING LEVELS (AGE 5-16)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Girls (%)</th>
<th>Boys (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who can read at least sentences in Urdu</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who can read at least Words in English</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who can at least do Subtraction</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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</tbody>
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Target 4.1 of the SDG has committed that all children, regardless of background, should have access to free quality primary and secondary education. Target 4.5 specifically focuses on equity and aims to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training” (UNESCO, 2016a).

**PARENTAL EDUCATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>43%</td>
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</table>

44% mothers have completed primary education
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

LAHORE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MOST DEPRIVED DISTRICT</th>
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PROFILE
High value of HDI (closer to 1) means higher development levels and more availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT
Lahore, a district in Punjab, is the country’s second most populous city after Karachi, also the wealthiest with an estimated GDP of $64.1 billion as of 2018 (Economic Survey of Pakistan). However, the outskirts of Lahore still present a gloomy picture with many villages with informal settlements viewed as a katchi abadi in the ever-growing city.

The village Khamba near Gujjar Colony, also resembles a typical village surrounded by heaps of garbage located outside a shiny sub-urban locality. Jamila, fifteen years old, resident of that village lives in a slum and picks garbage with her father from adjoining housing societies. She was a very bright student, who got dropped out from school while she was in class 4. She had dreams of becoming a doctor but had to forego her education to support her family.

For the wedding of Jamila’s elder sister, her father took high-interest loan from a private moneylender of the village. The family was already suffering from chronic poverty and hence were not able to re-pay the loan in time. Jamila had no choice but to quit her schooling and help her family to pay the loan along with her other siblings.

It’s been two years since she is working to clear the loan and she has to work for another three years in order to pay the entire amount. “I would now have been in class 6 but did not want my mother and father to be troubled. They still get threats when the monthly installment gets delayed even by a day”.

While speaking to her mother, it was further revealed that most of the families of that area were in debt of the money lenders and it was a common practice. Mostly men were involved in occupations such as fruit selling, garbage-picking, or working as porters getting very low daily wages while women were mostly found to be working as housemaids. The meagre income earned by the households was only sufficient enough to feed them, let alone assist them to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty.

Income disparities resulting in to child labour:

Girls like Jamila are forced into child labor because of poverty, lack of parental education, societal norms. migration into the bigger cities, bonded labour, caste and
ethnicity etc. Because of lack of education, she has less possibility on the labour market and is only relegated to low-paid and unskilled jobs. This chain is hard to break because the exploited young girl becomes the exploited adult woman who often does not see her work as an economic activity but as under-valued.

Jamila still dreams of going to school but is utterly disappointed at her fate. Many girls of her village have also succumbed to the family pressure and got involved in child labor at a very young age. At the federal level, Pakistan’s government has banned hazardous labor under age 14, military service under 18, and implemented compulsory education to age 16. A lot still needs to be done to implement laws and policies against exploitative (girl) child labour, to raise awareness in the society at large and hence to make child labour a part of history.

Urgent Actions Needed

1. Successful implementation of right to education stills requires considerable efforts.
2. There is an urgency to address child labor issues particularly in villages, by providing financial and occupational opportunities.
3. In such poor and vulnerable spaces there must be provision of interest free loans for the families in need. As the families are often unable to settle the loan amount on time and the loan’s amount increases, it therefore becomes a burden for even the coming generations.
4. Income disparities must be addressed, as there are many Jamilas who are involved in child labor and living a miserable life. These girls are working in fields for vegetation or harvesting, working as housemaids and dropping out of the schools in order to support their families. The money they earn is not enough to promise them a secure future and they have to be brought back into the system by all means.
INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS FOR GIRLS EDUCATION TOWARDS GENDER JUSTICE

Interventions for out of school girls’ education through accelerated learning readiness (6-12); second chance post primary and scholarship programs for out of school adolescents demonstrate tremendous promise for scaled up replications supported by UKAID & OXFAM.

From Assessment to Action:
- Women Leaders of Tomorrow – Post primary programs for girls In Punjab- 70 scholarships with school support and leadership opportunities.

Women Leaders of Tomorrow:

Overall Objective:
“The young girls emerge as future leaders leading lives of dignity by making informed choices, claiming rights and control over equitable opportunities”.

Outcome:
At least 70 girls are mobilized, organized and well-equipped with demonstrated academic and leadership skills leading their course of education beyond primary and secondary levels as future leaders.

Key Strands:
- Provision of Scholarships to girls at secondary and post-secondary levels
- Training of Students:
  Leadership skills
  Technology Enabled Learning (Tablets)
  Life Skills Based Education
  Right to Education
  Technical Vocational Education & Training (TVET)
  Participation in Children’s Literature Festival (3-18 years) with Teachers
- Training of Teachers:
  Subject Based Training
  Gender Responsive Pedagogical Skills
  Life Skills Based Education
- Formation of Youth Parliament- giving voice to young leaders
- Advocacy with Policy Makers-Parliamentarians -Charter of Demands

Cost Per Student (Scholarship) per month: Rs. 2000 – 5000 (duration varies according to the academic program-middle; matric, college)
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

KHYBER PAKTHUNKHWA
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

D.I. KHAN

GENDER JUSTICE REPORT CARD

DERA ISMAIL KHAN

HDI RANK 0.496

Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2017

SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

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EDUCATION

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Gender gaps remain wide in 2018 (13%)

LEARNING LEVELS (AGE 5-16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who can read at least sentences in Urdu</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who can read at least Words in English</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who can at least do Subtraction</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GIRLS CONTINUE TO LAG BEHIND!**
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PARENTAL EDUCATION

- **Mother**: 32%
- **Father**: 61%

32% mothers have completed primary education
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

DERA ISMAIL KHAN

<table>
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PROFILE

Lower value of HDI (closer to 0.5) means lower development levels and lesser availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT

Dera Ismail Khan District, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the bank of River Indus, is one of the least developed districts with poor scores on the Human Development Index. It is situated on the west bank of the Indus River, about 300 kilometers south of the provincial capital Peshawar, and 230 kilometers northwest of Multan, Punjab. D.I. Khan lies close to Mianwali/Punjab through Chashma Barrage, and another road connects the city to Zhob/Balochistan. It is in close proximity to the new merged districts of South/North Waziristan (earlier FATA). Seraiki (a south Punjab dialect) is the dominant language; the district lies at a junction close to Pashtun and Baloch tribes.

D I Khan’s economy is predominantly agrarian, where land is fertile for crops such as wheat, sugarcane and fruits production is remarkable with the famous Dhakki dates being exported to Middle East.

Kaali Vanda, a rural village in D I Khan, was where we locate the origins of Gulnaz’s story. Walking across the muddy streets in thickly populated Pashtun village, also home to many temporary displaced people from South and North Waziristan, Gulnaz was among the few found to be coming back from school on a sunny afternoon.

12 year old Gulnaz was enrolled in the only government school of her area. Her father is a truck driver and her mother a house wife, with two younger and one elder brother. Gulnaz’s mother was always fond of watching girls going to school. She has never been to a school herself, but always dreamt of sending her only daughter to a school, dressing her in uniform and packing her school bag. “I made a promise to myself that my daughter will always go to school and become something one day along with my sons.”

The school where Gulnaz goes to is an old government primary school, located two streets away. It hardly looks like a school as the bathrooms are broken and not at all usable, the roof is coming apart with goats and chickens roaming around on the small premises with a tractor parked right outside.
“We have no other option”, mentioned Gulnaz’s mother. “We have no middle school here and my heart sinks when I think that Gulnaz will soon finish her primary school and won’t be able to continue with her studies. There is a middle and high school but it is for boys only.”

Gulnaz told us that she wants to become a doctor. Her brother has been ill for a week but there is no clinic nearby where they can take him to. “We are ten girls in class 5 and all of us will drop out after March with no middle school”.

Based on our conversation, it was evident that the families want their girls to go to school and complete their education but they can’t do anything if there is no middle school. It is heart breaking to see girls get left behind because of poverty, cultural norms, attitudes, mindset and now also due to non-availability of functional schools. The promise of article 25 A or the fundamental right to education as promised by the constitution of Pakistan for all children 5-16 years of age seems so distant for Gulnaz and her friends!

There are not enough government schools for all children to have access and there is little commitment to looking for innovative ways of having double shift in the same middle and high schools that are located in the Kaali Vanda, so that Gulnaz and her friends can continue schooling. Government schools especially at post primary levels are in such short supply that even in Pakistan’s major cities many children cannot reach a school on foot safely and in a reasonable amount of time. The situation is far worse in rural areas, where schools are even more scarce, and it is less likely that private schools will fill the gap. Families that can access a government school find it to be over crowded often facing problems of multi grade teaching. Particularly in D I Khan, there has been a massive increase in the provision of religious education, ranging from formal madrasas to informal arrangements where children study the Quran in the house of a neighbor. Religious schools are often the only type of education service delivery available to poor families in the district. They are not, however, an adequate replacement, as they generally do not teach non-religious subjects and are not an alternative for formal schooling.

The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is committed to education reforms that enable all children aged 5-16 as per the KP Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act 2017 to have sustained access to quality learning and schooling. Currently there are almost 8 million of children in this age group but only 85% are currently enrolled in school. The number of out of school children is estimated to be is above 1 million with more girls than boys to be out of school. This was revealed as per the findings of a rigorous household census undertaken by the Elementary & Secondary Education Department (2017). District-wise population of girls and boys (5-17) is shared below for D I Khan which clearly reveals that girls are disproportionately affected compared to boys in the out of school or never enrolled category.
Table: District wise detail of children enrollment and dropouts

Source E&SED 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Boys Currently Enrolled</th>
<th>Boys Never Enrolled</th>
<th>Boys Previously Enrolled*</th>
<th>Girls Currently Enrolled</th>
<th>Girls Never Enrolled</th>
<th>Girls Previously Enrolled*</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D.I. Khan</td>
<td>169,249</td>
<td>41,391</td>
<td>18,110</td>
<td>105,869</td>
<td>71,745</td>
<td>16,683</td>
<td>423,047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Previously enrolled refers to drop outs

Such forms of an “upward bottleneck” will continue to exist as children, especially girls, will get older. Secondary schools are in shorter supply than primary schools, and they also tend to be gender segregated. This further limits the options for girls and hence they are pushed out of the system. It is encouraging to note even in conservative areas, that communities are reflecting growing acceptance of the value of girls’ education by sending their girls to school.

**Urgent Actions Needed**

The government should be welcoming this change with positive actions and be making efforts to address such gaps by building more schools for girls at post primary/secondary level and providing access to all children to receive high quality primary and secondary education. It is further needed to ensure post primary opportunities and facilities such as Middle/Secondary Schools in well populated areas/villages to ensure girls as well as boys achieve 12 years of schooling.

Extend second chance programs in these localities for providing drop out girls with opportunities to catch up on education at primary/post primary levels with life skills and where appropriate technical vocational programs.
HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

PESHAWAR

ASER PAKISTAN 2018 (RURAL)

GENDER JUSTICE REPORT CARD

PESHAWAR

HDI RANK
0.756

Higher value of HDI (closer to 1) means higher development levels and a greater availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2017

SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Target 4.5 by 2030: Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.

Target 4.1 by 2030: Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Article 25-A, Right to Education

The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of age 5-16 years in such a manner as may be determined by law.

LOW INDICATORS OF QUALITY, EQUITY, AND ACCESS MEANS HIGHLY VULNERABLE GIRLS

EDUCATION

RURAL-URBAN

RELIGION

POVERTY

DISABILITY

CHILD MARRIAGES

Equity challenges for girls come at multiple intersections. The vicious cycle of deprivations needs to be broken by decision makers through an integrated results-based approach leading to social and gender justice.

“Gender justice refers to many more women gaining power, and that both men and women benefitting from less restrictive gender roles”. (Oxfam, 2019)

Social Justice is about everyone having access to equal economic political and social rights and opportunities. Gender Justice is about entitlements and empowerment through capabilities and choice; it is the absence of discrimination between genders and disadvantaged groups with accountability (adapted from...
Gender gaps remain wide in 2018 (16%)

LEARNING LEVELS (AGE 5-16)

Who can read at least sentences in Urdu/Pashto
- 63% boys
- 53% girls

Who can read at least Words in English
- 40% boys
- 31% girls

Who can at least do Subtraction
- 58% boys
- 52% girls

GIRLS CONTINUE TO LAG BEHIND!
Target 4.1 of the SDG has committed that all children, regardless of background, should have access to free quality primary and secondary education. Target 4.5 specifically focuses on equity and aims to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training” (UNESCO, 2016a).

PARENTAL EDUCATION

- 13% mothers have completed primary education
PROFILE
High value of HDI (closer to 1) means higher development levels and more availability of opportunities and freedom of choice for people to enhance their lives.

CONTEXT
The Case of Urmar village in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
“For boys, we have no rules; but girls, have pressing responsibilities”

In the face of customs and poverty, Sumaiya, Aimen and Mahnoor, dare not claim gender justice

Urmar is a discrete village located in Peshawar district, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The commonly spoken language in Urmar is Pashtu, while some, mostly men, can converse in Urdu. It is situated on lush green plains, full of vegetation and fruit trees; one could feel dust in the air due to unpaved roads. Not too long ago the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) enumerators had visited Urmar (November 2018) selecting 20 homes in the village for a floor level (grade 2) learning assessment of all children aged 5-16 years old. Today the same village is being revisited to explore the gendered dimensions of aspirations, customs and reality.

The village is surrounded by vast agricultural lands; fields of potatoes, onions, turnips, cauliflower and other vegetables are seen on the drive toward the village center. Fruit farming is also prevalent as orchards of citrus trees line the roads. The main economic activity is farming, along with some cattle raising; there are some small local businesses scattered along the way. Numerous solar panels are seen hoisted outside most local businesses. There are some kachay structures, built with clay and bricks, while few buildings are pucca, cemented.
Prevalence of Early Child Marriages: The Story of Sumaiya

The door of Sumaiya’s home was ajar. When we knocked, we were immediately ushered in and welcomed by her mother, Mehnaz. Inside the large metal main gate of the house, we noticed large worn sheets of cloth tied overhead for shade. On one distant corner, there was a bulky drum, burning dried wood, giving off a pungent charcoal smell that filled the air. The ground was uneven and muddy due to the morning rain, Mehnaz explained. As soon as we entered the house, we were greeted by multiple women and children. Mehnaz identified the 11 year old shy girl as her daughter, Sumaiya.

Sumaiya was reluctant to answer our questions, so Mehnaz, volunteered to speak on her behalf. We were led to a room at the far end of the house, with large colorful sofas and beds, and cemented walls. One side of the room had a decorated display of polished cooking utensils and houseware, brought to the household by newlywed brides as dowry. This room served as a combined living room and bedroom. Here, we were able to have an open discussion with all the women and children in the household. Mehnaz stated that they were all well aware of the importance of girls’ education, but in their family, it was not a custom for girls to pursue higher education. Sumaiya, tugging at the dupatta on her hair, was still hesitant to reply. Her mother continued, saying that her daughters have very weak learning in school, due to poor quality and absent teachers.

Sara, Sumaiya’s aunt, pointed out that since girls get married at a very young age in their family, it is difficult to pursue education. She said that she had completed 8th grade before she got married, and she hasn’t been able to continue her education ever since.

Noreen, another one of Sumaiya’s aunts, held that it was not possible for girls to complete elementary education; it is imperative for them to get married as early as possible, have children and look after the household. When inquired if the same is the case with boys in the family, we were told, “For boys, we have no rules”.

Noreen introduced Aimen, Sumaiya’s elder sister, who was 13 years old and getting married. She said that, even though, Aimen is intelligent, she is dropping out of school because of marriage. She added that the family doesn’t mind women’s education, but it depends on the circumstances.
Mehnaz commented that their lifestyle is very cumbersome. They have to do a lot of manual work and young girls need to help around the house until they move away after marriage. Education for girls is not a priority as girls have many other, ‘more pressing’ responsibilities.

**Hopes, Dreams and Chronic Poverty: The Story of Mahnoor**

While walking through the streets of Urmar, we noticed that a young girl had been following us quietly. We greeted her and asked if she went to school. She nodded enthusiastically. She was interested in having a conversation with us and led the way to her house.

Once inside, we were greeted by the women and children of the family, and seated on a *charpai* placed in the center of a wide open roofed space, in an uncemented house. The house had 2 small rooms and 13 residents. Mahnoor’s grandmother sat beside us and proudly looked at her granddaughter, eagerly awaiting our questions. Mahnoor’s mother informed us that she is 11 years old, although her grandmother insisted that she was 14. Mahnoor was asked to read sentences in English and Urdu and was able to do so effortlessly. When asked what she wants to be when she grows up, she replied, “A doctor!”

Matching Mahnoor’s enthusiasm, her mother, Samreen, added that she hoped Mahnoor would be a religious scholar, while her father wanted her to be a judge. This exchange was met with laughter from the other household members. When probed why, Mahnoor’s aunt replied that they were extremely constrained financially. Affording quality elementary education and later higher education seems like an enticing but farfetched dream. Samreen reiterated the lack of affordable quality education in the area; they needed effective schools, madrassas and colleges in close proximity. She said it is almost impossible for her to send Samreen far away for education. “This is why we laugh – Mahnoor may want to be a doctor, a judge or an *alima*, but does it matter?”

Mahnoor’s family is financially constrained. None of the children or adults in the household is educated; they have fallen prey to a poverty trap. The family’s main occupation is small-scale farming. Education may be a priority, but there is a dire lack of opportunity and resources. *Clearly, Mahnoor’s will be a still born aspiration! Or may be not!*
Urgent Actions Needed

Mobilize parliamentarians around Peshawar eager to support girls’ education at secondary and higher education levels as per the Pakistan Tehreek -e-Insaaf (PTI) 2018 manifesto -political mobilization is critical.

Ensure more functional facilities with better trained teachers with positive attitudes and competencies in local government schools.

Ensure post primary opportunities and facilities such as Middle/Secondary Schools in well populated areas/villages to ensure girls as well as boys achieve 12 years of schooling.

Extend second chance programs in these localities for providing drop out girls with opportunities to catch up on education at primary/post primary levels with life skills and where appropriate technical vocational programs.

Extend awareness on the KP Free & Compulsory Primary & Secondary Education Act 2017 to parents and communities to demand their rights and entitlements for girls and boys.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Free and Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act 2017 remains in a state of 'barzakh' (purgatory) even though it is a fundamental constitutional right (Article 25 A) for all children 5-16 years of age! The 2017 act has many limitations and does not reflect the progressive reforms of KP!

For girls this chronic social and economic deprivation needs Urgent Action!
Interventions for out of school girls’ education through accelerated learning readiness (6-12); second chance post primary and scholarship programs for out of school adolescents demonstrate tremendous promise for scaled up replications supported by UKAID & OXFAM.

**From Assessment to Action:**

- Chalo Parho Barho (Let’s Read and Grow) for out of school and in-school children at risk (especially girls).

**Chalo Parho Barho - (Let’s Read and Grow) for out of school and in-school children at risk (especially girls).**

**Overall Objective:**

An approach /program being undertaken at scale at by ITA (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi) since 2014/15 has been of Teaching at the Right Level through Chalo Parho Barho (CPB) or let’s read and grow, an accelerated learning program showing rigorous learning gains. CPB is a ‘bridge or catch up program ‘of learning preparedness for out of school children, adolescents and adults alike. ITA is currently completing a program of CPB (in Mardan and D I Khan in 1500 schools) reaching out to 60,000 children aged 6-12 who are out of school and in-school children at risk in grades 3-5 struggling with basic literacy and numeracy (arithmetic) skills demonstrating rapid results.

CPB is run as an intensive learning camp of 45-60 days duration in a government school space. It has a 9 Step Process:

- Coordination and Permission from SED to target specific areas /communities in need.
- Identification of target age /grade children in target communities and schools
- Baseline assessment of learning levels of each child (one on one) through ASER tools (http://aserpakistan.org/tools)
- Grouping children according to their learning level (Group I =Nothing/Beginner; Group II= intermediate) in the initial phase
- Training camp facilitators through a 5-6day boot camp on the Combined Action for Maximized Learning (CAMAL) methodology
- Implementation of the camp systematically for 3 hours (1 hour per subject)
- Assessment including baseline, midline and end line tests to measure learning gains and shifting children in Group II (intermediate & Group III (advanced)-an app is also available for online /offline on program monitoring and assessment of learning
- Enrolment of out of school children on merit in govt/SED schools and stabilization of in-school at risk children with significant learning gains.
• Publicize widely learning and access gains to the community, government /province.

• This 45-60 day camp has produced phenomenal gains not just in Pakistan but also in other parts of the world such as India and Africa. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the OOSC children who were part of the intervention showed improved learning outcomes: 25% in literacy and more than 15% in numeracy.

1. The in-school children gained and stabilized with good learning gains up to 30%.
2. 70% of OOSC children who completed the camps were mainstreamed into public school beyond ITA’s estimated projection of 30% enrolment of OOSC.

ITA, through its partners, the Governments in all provinces, communities, CSOs, industry, INGOs and Development Partners will continue to advocate for Quality Girls Education with at least 12 Years of Schooling. Working with girls, adolescents and youth is an opportunity to catalyse accelerated multipliers for gender justice achieving many more targets, enabled by the fundamentals of education, health, livelihoods and rule of law; not just for one generation but across generations. ITA strongly invested in this sector with its leaders as global champions for education in general and girls education in particular are supporting action for the Platform for Girls Education and its highly relevant recommendations (2019).
Recommendations for 12 years of girls education - Girls Platform For Education

12 Years of Quality Education for All Girls: A Commonwealth Perspective
What Works for Marginalized Girls’ Education?

A. Leadership and financing
1. Visible high-level political commitment backed up with resources.
2. Grassroots leadership increasing awareness about the value of girls’ education.
3. Formula funding targeting resources at those most at risk of being left behind.
4. Use of data to inform policy change.

B. Targeted approaches
6. Addressing multifaceted challenges that girls face when they reach puberty.
7. Eliminating cost barriers.
8. Tackling disadvantages that intersect with gender, such as disability, location, poverty.

C. Tackling discrimination
9. School environments that are safe spaces.
10. Gender-sensitive teaching practices and materials.
11. Promoting women’s economic empowerment and providing pathways to productive work.
12. Tackling access and learning simultaneously, with sufficient resources.

Pinjray ki Maynah (MYNAH IN A CAGE)

A poem on Child Marriage By Rumana Husain for the Children’s Literature Festival (CLF)

Bhai got a mynah in a cage and kept swinging it
Swinging it, swinging it and swinging it

"Look Hamida, this is my mynah,
You like it? Isn’t it a nice mynah?

She has black feathers and a yellow beak
She keeps hitting at the cage, eeeexxk!

I am going to hang the cage here
And get some fruit and water, dear."

Me and my younger sisters sat there
Staring at the cage hanging in mid air

The mynah kept hopping from one side to the other
Until it just couldn't go any further

It was scared and looked extremely sad
Her friends were lost, I felt quite bad

Then we took over the feeding, and everyday
We fed her, entertained her, wanted her to play
Bhai and Baba had left in their boat
For fishing in high seas remote
Me and my sisters attend school
Ammi is home alone, she is cool
This is our everyday routine
On education we are very keen
Baba, Chacha, Bhai and our Ammi
None are literate, unfortunately
But we are very good at our studies
Urdu, Sindhi, English, we aren't dummies
History, Geography or Mathematics
We are good even at dramatics!
About my drawing I'll boast
All the fish I can make or a boat
My village is called Ibrahim Hyderi
Sea, sky, shade, boat, tree
We climb on the ferris wheel
Up and down, we reel and squeal
I want to study, study and study
I want to laugh and play, get all muddy
Baba and Bhai have now returned
Loads of shrimps and fish they have earned
We peeled and cleaned the shrimp
Piles of small and big shrimp
The next morning we all devoted
Mending fishing net, and Baba throated
First about this thing and that thing
And then lo and behold, about my wedding!
"Hamida is our older daughter
She must now bring us honour
My friend Rafiq Bhai’s elder son
We know him well, consider it done."
Baba said to Ammi, who turned to me
She kissed my forehead, said "let it be."

"Our Hamida is very young now
No need to make a promise, a vow
She wants to educate herself more
So she could not just walk but soar
She doesn't want an early marriage
Her life can be of courage and knowledge."

Baba retorted, "she is a fisherman's daughter.
Why to be educated, what's the matter?"

Ammi however did not give way
She brought him water in a tray
The conversation wasn't over as yet
Mynah and I both cried. Oh the pet!

"What's mere twelve years in one's life?
What's the hurry to become a wife!
I am an illiterate, so are you and our boy
Let's think hard. Educate our girls to bring us joy
Getting young girls married is definitely wrong
Times have changed, they need to learn, be strong
Let's not snatch away their childhood
Let them not be forced into womanhood
Let them pursue their dream, choose a career
Be it of a doctor, engineer, or a teacher
Our country has accomplished girls - our nation's pride
Known internationally - not for being a child bride
I have watched on tv many such things
Our daughters' teachers say, give them wings
It is disastrous for a girl's health
To marry early and lose that wealth
It is outdated to marry before eighteen or twenty
Let's move with the times, no more hanky panky
Our daughters will bring about a change
This village's better fortune, they will arrange."
Baba was thinking deep, I could tell from his eyes
He was hardworking, and Ammi was very wise

Bhai then sneaked behind me near the mynah's cage
Fed the mynah, he appeared older than his age
Bhai then tugged at my long braid
"Boo-ya! My little sister," he swayed

"Listening to Ammi's sensible talk
I too want to turn the clock
I wish to go to school
Have some reading writing tool."

Next Bhai opened the cage and said
"Go mynah, yellow beak and eyes red
Go, don't be sad, you are free!
Have your choice, your right, flee!"

Bhai turned and looked at our Baba
We saw the mynah fly... end of her saga
Baba now had a smile on his face
That was the end of my case!

Rumana Husain has written and illustrated over 60 children's books for several publishers including Oxford University Press, Danesh Publications, ERDC, Kathalya Publications (Nepal), Nami Children's Books (South Korea), Butterfly Works (The Netherlands), Pratham Books (India) and the Bookgroup, which she co-founded in Karachi in 1988. She is also Trained as a graphic designer, she has had an evolving career: from teaching art to making fabric-toys and quilted artwork, as an innovative school head, teacher-trainer, book illustrator and writer. She worked as Head, Activism & Outreach at the Children's Museum for Peace and Human Rights from 2001 to 2008, and was teaching at and also heading the CAS School from 1986 to 1996. **Rumana Husain is an Honorary Director on the Board of the Children's Literature Festival (CLF) at Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)** She is the Honorary General Secretary of the Karachi Conference Foundation, and a Founding Member and Member Executive Committee of the Society for I Am Karachi (IAK).