

PATHWAY TO PROGRESS: GIRLS' EDUCATION IN RURAL SINDH



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AUGUST 2013

Education for all, including girls.

The UN highlights girls' education can have a profound influence on her participation in public life. One of the best return-on-investments for long-term country development is educating girls and women. Girls are contributors to society and the cost of excluding them from participation is enormous. Women with more education tend to be healthier, have fewer children, and secure better health care and education for their children. These benefits impact future generations and transform communities.

Approximately 34.3 million children reside in Pakistan, with more than 65% living in rural areas. Yet nationwide in 2011, 3.3 million girls and 2 million boys were out of school. This statistic highlights the extreme vulnerability of girls to exclusion from education. While the numbers are an improvement from previous years, Pakistan's school enrollment measures are only a fraction of receiving quality education and retention issues.

Sindh's Profile

Since 2010, the Sindh province has experienced many hardships due to impact of the floods. Internal displacement, destroyed crops, slow economic growth and weakened institutional infrastructure were all byproducts of recent

events. Yet in spite of the challenges, Sindh remains committed to maintaining educational support for its population.

UNESCO Islamabad reports that Sindh's Gender Parity Index (GPI), a ratio measure of gross enrollment of girls to boys, has been declining since 2008-2009. While the urban areas maintained steady rates of 0.9 over the years, there was a marked decline in both primary and secondary enrollment for girls in the rural areas, most likely due to the floods. The urban-rural divide in the economy and schooling exacerbates gender inequities at the rural level.

In ASER Pakistan's 2012 report, the rural portion of Sindh province was among the lowest performing for literacy and numeracy learning outcomes in the nation. Of the 40,488 children surveyed, only 24% of girls and 44% of boys, ages 6-16, were enrolled in school. Approximately 32.4% of all youth are out of school, which is an increase compared to ASER's 2011 assessment of 29.5%. Out of school youth are comprised of children who have never attended school and those who have dropped out of school. Table 1 indicates the sharp divide between urban Karachi and its rural counterparts, at almost 8



ASSESSING CHILDREN'S LEARNING OUTCOMES THROUGH TESTING.

times more likely for girls living in a rural area to be out of school compared to the city.

From the 2012 survey, an overwhelming 90% of rural girls are enrolling in government school with private, madrassas and other forms of education comprising the remaining 10%. Of those attending madrassas, girls are the greatest share of the enrollment. In addition,

girls' enrollment in a specific type of school was found to be statistically significant, suggesting that there is a relationship to be explored further, regarding which schools parents decide to send their girls.

According to UNICEF (2011), differences may be due to learning environment factors, such as female

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH, 2012

Sindh, Ages 6-16	Boys	Girls	Total
Dropouts*	4.2%	3.5%	7.7%
Never Enrolled*	11.6%	13.1%	24.7%
Total- Rural	15.8%	16.6%	32.4%
Total-Karachi	4.5%	1.9%	6.4%

Policy Recommendations

Annual Status of Education Report

انٹرنیشنل
ASER
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- ◆ Invest in school structural supports, such as toilets, boundary walls and drinking water, for mixed, co-educational schools.
- ◆ Support collaboration with and educational research on Deeni Madrassas to better understand its role for girls' education.
- ◆ Conduct more exploratory research on the different types of schools (i.e. government, private, madrassas, non-formal education and other) and its relation to learning outcomes for girls and boys.
- ◆ Support qualitative research to explore differences in the attitudes and perspective of girls' enrollment in different types of schools (i.e. government, private, madrassas, non-formal education and other).
- ◆ Disaggregate data and incorporate gender indicators in assessment and evaluation studies in order to effectively measure gender equity in schools (i.e. teacher gender).

teachers, the availability of drinking water, boundary walls, usability of toilets and a mothers education.

In an effort to validate these findings, ASER found that girls are learning less than boys, across all learning outcomes. With the learning outcome, reading letters, approximately 40% of girls in madrassas were reading Urdu/Pashto/Sindhi letters compared to 21% of girls in government schools.

Similarly, of the 706 government and private schools surveyed directly, 70% were mixed schools and 25% boys schools and 5% girls schools. Among government schools, where the majority of girls are enrolled,

Figure 1: % Availability of Resources by School Category



Figure 1 demonstrates the increasing resources invested in girls schools for basic supports. Both boundary walls and toilet availability were found to be statistically significant, suggesting there is a relationship to be further defined between the school categories. While it is promising to know that money is being invested in girls schools, these findings reveal that mixed schools have the least supportive structures, which girls also attend. Given issues with drop-outs during puberty ages for girls, this finding should be given more consideration.

More data is needed for Sindh to fully understand the challenges of girls' enrollment. Further support is needed to secure girls completion of school for a better future.

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