It’s a Right!
Make it Right!
Education for
Girls & Women
NOW!

GLOBAL ACTION WEEK
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Policy Brief No. 02

Rural Girls in Pakistan: Constraints of Policy and Culture
Gender Disparity in Enrollment and Learning Levels – National Profiles

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Pakistan 2010 surveyed 32 rural districts of Pakistan and collected information on 54062 children (58% male, 42% female) for 3-16 years age group from 19,006 households in 960 villages, 852 government schools and 445 private schools.

**Enrollment 6-16 year olds:** 80% Enrollment in rural areas, 38% girls and 62% boys. Of the 20% out of school (never enrolled and drop out) there are equal percentage of girls and boys.

**Enrollment 6-10 year olds:** 83% Enrollment with 60% boys and 40% girls. Of the 17% out of school children, 52% are girls compared to 48% boys.

**Enrollment 3-5 years:** 45% Enrollment in Katchi/ECE: 43% girls and 57% boys.

*Figure 1: Enrollment by Gender and Type of Institution (3-16 Years Age Group)*

*Figure 2: Reading Urdu/Sindhi and Arithmetic Levels by Gender (6-16 Year Age Group)*
Enrollment Trends in Government & Private Schools: Of the total enrolled in government schools, only 37.8% were girls. 40.8% of the children enrolled in private schools were girls and 59.2% were boys. A greater number of boys as compared to girls were enrolled in both types of institutes, however a greater percentage of girls were going to the private schools as compared to government schools. Parents are willing to spend on girls’ education in private schools.

Girls’ enrollment outstripped boys’ enrollment in Gilgit-Baltistan, where 52.2% girls and 47.8% boys were enrolled in government schools, out of the total 93.7% children enrolled in schools. The worst situation was in Balochistan where out of the 64.9% of all the children enrolled, 33.4% girls and 66.6% boys were in government schools.

Reading & Arithmetic Ability by Gender: The percentage of girls and boys from class 3 who could read at least a class 2 level Urdu/Sindhi sentences is 33.4% and 36.9% respectively. While for arithmetic levels, 29.5% girls and 33.6% boys from class 3 were at least able to do subtractions. Girls lagged behind for both reading and arithmetic levels compared to boys. The difference in learning levels amongst girls and boys is highest in Balochistan, with 7.4% reading and 6.1% arithmetic gap in favor of boys, while the gaps are lowest in Gilgit with 2.2% reading and 4.0% arithmetic gap in favor of boys.

In Rahim Yar Khan district (Punjab), girls out-performed boys in Urdu, English and Arithmetic!

Out of School Children: More girls than boys were found to be out of school except in the 14 to 16 years age group. 4.7% girls and 4.4% boys of the total number of children falling in 6 to 10 years age group and 2.5% girls and 2.2% of boys of all the children aged between 11-13 years were not enrolled in any type of school. Fewer girls 3.0% in age group 14 to 16 years than boys 3.6% were out of school. The learning levels of out of school children are comparable to in-school children and higher in Balochistan for all three subject areas!

Mothers’ Literacy: 67.7% of the mothers were found to be illiterate. Mothers’ literacy is a crucial factor in determining children’s education and health. Numerous studies show that literate mothers result in more educated children who have much better lifetime outcomes.

Only 32.3% mothers’ were found to be literate!

Statement of Issue – In Rural Pakistan

- There are larger number of girls than boys who are not enrolled in any type of schools.
- The learning levels for girls is lower as compared to boys
- The learning levels of out of school children is comparable to in-school children and they need to be given a second chance opportunity.
- The demand for girls education is highly sensitive to household poverty
- The cost of not investing in girls education far exceeds the cost of investing (UNGEI)
Reasons for Gender Disparity in Rural Areas

- Insufficient schools in rural areas for girls
- Parental concerns for girls’ protection and mobility are the main reasons for not sending them to school especially if the school is located in distant locations from their homes.
- Poverty undermines girls’ right to education. School fees and expenses relating to transport, clothing and books widen the gender gap: as families cannot afford to educate all their children, girls are the ones who stay at home, helping with household chores and minding siblings.
- Inadequate school facilities like boundary walls, useable toilets and drinking water.
- In some cases early marriages for girls lead to their higher drop out rates.
- Economic shocks like crop loss (income loss)/ emergencies/displacement effects girls’ schooling disproportionately compared to boys.

Suggested Actions

- Government to ensure that education as a fundamental right is more accessible to low-income families and rural population, with special attention to girls for completing primary and secondary education through aggressive equity focused approaches
- Special subsidies and social safety nets to support girls’ attendance in schools at primary/middle/secondary levels with provision of mid day meals and cash grants/vouchers.
- Improve school facilities by providing separate toilets for girls and boundary walls.
- Girls to be provided hostel facilities along with teachers in rural middle and high schools.
- Decision by government to determine the placement of new primary schools in areas with wide gender disparity in enrollment rates in Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Expansion of non-formal learning options is critical for out of school girls and boys for catch up/second chance programs and mainstreaming in formal schools when ready.
- At least 70% of the teachers in government primary/middle schools must be females
- Make gender and child sensitive training a core principal in all teacher training initiatives.
- Allow flexible school schedules to accommodate girls’ work responsibilities.
- The content of all educational curricula needs to be revised regularly to eliminate any material that reinforces prevalent stereotypes and injustices against women/girls.
- Provide certified vocational training options to girls and boys after middle and in secondary/post secondary levels.
- Extensive media campaigns to be initiated both by the public and private sector to create awareness about the benefits of female education: entitlements for labor markets; low maternal mortality, fertility and infant mortality rates.
- Establish special public employment schemes for girls who have completed high school education.

Under Article 25 – A, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution (2010) Education is a Fundamental Right for children 5-16 years, requiring urgent actions for access, equity and quality

References: