

Summary note: Pakistan's action plan for progressing towards achieving MDG 2

More children in school, for longer, and learning more

The most recent education statistics indicate that in 2011-2 Pakistan had a national primary net enrolment rate of 68%, with 73% for boys and 63% for girls.

To accelerate progress towards the MDG target of universal primary education by 2015-16, each of the eight provincial and area departments of education has developed a three-year plan of action. These plans have identified the challenges of increasing primary enrolment, quantified the number of out-of-school children (OOSC), developed strategies for enhancing existing educational opportunities and innovative approaches to maximize enrolment within the stipulated time frame, and estimated the number of additional children to be enrolled and the corresponding costs. The subsequent consolidation of these plans led to the National Plan of Action (NPA).

The National Plan aims to increase the national net primary enrolment from 68% in 2011-12 to 91% by 2015-16, with targets as follows:

	Population (5-9 yrs) 2011-12	NER 2011-12	Out of School Children 2011-12	Children to be Enrolled 2013/14-2015/16	NER by 2015-16
Total	21,148,934	68%	6,703,421	5,066,471	91%
Boys	10,990,209	73%	2,926,850	2,367,630	93%
Girls	10,158,725	63%	3,776,571	2,696,958	88%

The National Plan of Action also sets targets for improving enrolment in each of Pakistan's provinces and areas:

Province/ area	2011-2012			2015-2016			Increase
	M	F	All	M	F	All	
Pakistan	73%	63%	68%	93%	88%	91%	23%
Balochistan	56%	44%	51%	62%	56%	60%	9%
FATA	81%	38%	60%	87%	41%	65%	5%
GB	66%	60%	63%	80%	77%	79%	16%
ICT	68%	72%	70%	97%	98%	98%	28%
KP	91%	69%	81%	100%	90%	95%	14%
Punjab	73%	67%	70%	100%	100%	100%	30%
Sindh	69%	57%	63%	86%	74%	80%	17%
AJK	58%	59%	58%	75%	75%	75%	17%

The fundamental challenge of improving enrolment is implementation. The 23% target to be achieved over the next three academic years compares with a 2% increase in NER over the past four years (PSLM 2011-12). Pakistan's provinces are each responsible for education strategy, policy and delivery, but the plan provides a shared understanding of priorities across the country. These are geared to ensuring high enrolment and retention through strong political will focused on:

1. Increasing Pakistan’s own investment in primary and secondary education, including more efficient use of existing resources;
2. Improving the quality of education, with a particular focus on early grade literacy;
3. Improving the responsiveness of providers to what parents want through stronger accountability;
4. Scaling-up solutions that deliver better access to quality education at lower cost.

The actual expansion of the system will be achieved through following four strategies:

- a. Enrolment of new students in existing schools: This strategy focuses on enrolling out-of-school children in existing formal and non-formal schools with under-utilized capacity through enrollment drives. (Additional children to be enrolled in 3 years: 3.2 million)
- b. Enrolment of new students in formal schools through provision of an additional room: Construction of an additional classroom and provision of a teacher in existing public formal schools will help in accommodating new students. (Additional children to be enrolled in 3 years: 0.5 million)
- c. Establishment of new schools to accommodate additional students : Construction of new two-room formal school and/or opening of one-room non-formal schools¹ in under-developed areas where enrolment is low due to non-availability of formal public schools. (Additional children to be enrolled in 3 years: 1.3 million)
- d. Incentives for attracting and retaining students, especially those from disadvantaged groups, including girls e.g. stipends, food-for-education, uniforms, etc. These incentives will be given to children from poorest families. (10.3 million children in 3 years i.e. 3.4 million children per year).

The provinces are developing implementation action plans in light of National Plan of Action. These plans reflect both new initiatives and the continuation and refinement of existing efforts. Each province’s plan and approach is different, however, in general, the plans incorporate seven main elements to address bottlenecks and deprivations in relation to access, quality and governance of the education system:



1. School improvement

Many parents do not enrol their children because the quality of schools is poor. In addition, many children say they are ‘not interested in school’ reflecting the low quality of provision.

¹ According to the plan around 25 thousand non-formal basic education schools will be opened in the country upto 2015-16.

Improvements to schools will be essential to attract the 19% of children in Pakistan who never go to school and the 9% who attend but dropout before completing primary school (PSLM). The provinces have launched and are in process of intensifying school improvement plans to improve the provision of services in schools. Special attention is being given to improving girls' schools to close the gender gap and to the provision of basic facilities (particularly toilets, drinking water, electricity and boundary walls). Other areas of focus include ensuring good teacher attendance (including piloting the use of technology) and improving the quality of teaching.

2. Teacher redistribution

Most areas of Pakistan employ enough teachers to ensure Universal Primary Enrolment with a satisfactory student-to-teacher ratio. However, teachers are spread unevenly through the system, with many more teachers in urban areas and secondary schools. As a result, there are insufficient teachers in primary schools in low-enrolment areas to ensure universal enrolment. In order to ensure that there are enough teachers in low-enrolment areas, provinces are in the process of identifying and transferring teachers from over-staffed to under-staffed schools and prioritising posting of new teachers to areas with the greatest need through innovative approaches such as merger, consolidation and rationalization of schools, female teacher incentives in accommodation, transportation, allowances and cluster hostel models.

3. Targeted expansion

Many out-of-school children are already close to a school. However, there are some areas that require new schools to address the needs of out-of-school children. Given the constrained fiscal situation, expansion of the system is being targeted in those areas. For this purpose, provinces are combining the efforts of both the government and non-government sectors (private, NGOs, others). The latter can in some cases deliver higher quality schooling at a lower cost, and as a result, the provinces are now funding more than one million children to attend publicly-funded privately-operated schools. The focus of expansion will be girls' schools since girls are more likely to be out of school and are also less willing to travel long distances to school.

4. Measures to lower financial barriers

The cost of education is a significant barrier for low-income families. In Pakistan, provinces have taken several initiatives to decrease the cost of education (e.g. provision of free textbooks) but the cost is still considerable for the poorest families, particularly those with several children. Fee waivers have been introduced in some areas for the poorest families but they are not always applied systematically. Going forward, provinces plan to take more concrete measures to lower financial barriers including the complete elimination of fees for the poorest children, provision of vouchers (to cover uniform, stationary, etc.) to poor families and focusing the existing income support program in low enrolment areas.

5. Health and nutrition programs

Poor families often struggle to provide good healthcare and adequate nutrition to their children and the public health care system has been unable to effectively reach many such families. This also affects their learning achievement. To attract children from poor families to schools, provinces will provide more healthcare and nutrition facilities in schools in low enrolment areas. This will make schools more attractive to parents and will help raise learning levels. Specific measures include the provision of free nutritional supplements to

targeted poor children in low enrolment localities and providing free check-ups by community doctors or health workers at schools.

6. On time ground-level campaign

An effective and timely house-to-house campaign is crucial to convince parents to enrol their children and ensure that they enrol at the right age. Currently, around 35% of Pakistani children do enrol in school but enrol late (PSLM). All provinces are executing or planning to execute major ground-level enrolment campaigns by equipping teachers with the right messages and ensuring consistent implementation throughout the system. Other stakeholders (including lady health workers, religious leaders and union council members) are being engaged to convince parents to enrol children at the right age. The ground-level campaign is being supplemented by a mass communication and civil engagement strategy.

7. Strengthening monitoring and top level leadership involvement

Achieving Universal Enrolment will require coordination across a large number of entities. It will mean breaking through political barriers and securing additional financing. This is unlikely to happen without top-level leadership from the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary in each province (and at the federal level). Where this leadership has been present – for instance in response to many of the crises which Pakistan has faced in past years – Pakistan has been able to achieve dramatic progress and mobilisation of resources in a short period of time. Provinces will need to ensure that good data is collected regularly and is reviewed in a quarterly meeting in each province where the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary personally review progress. For ensuring better coordination between government agencies and people, the Office of the Deputy Commissioner has been revived in all the provinces.

Action by the Federal Government

Following the 18th amendment, education is a provincial responsibility. Government of Pakistan has recently inserted Article 25-A in the constitution of Pakistan that bounce the state for provision of free and compulsory education to all children's of the age of 5 to 16 years in the country . This enables approaches which are more closely tailored to the unique situation in each province and better monitoring of implementation. However, the federal government will help accelerate progress by providing regular national data, convening the provinces regularly to help review progress and share lessons learned, and ensuring that education is properly resourced and sufficient funding is dispersed to the provinces.

Costs and funding

The National Plan for Action contains budget estimates for providing sufficient teachers, infrastructure and incentives for universal primary enrolment. These show that over the next three years, Pakistan could need to spend an additional Rs 189 billion to set up new schools, expand existing schools, recruit new teachers and provide incentives to targeted children. This amount is based on certain assumptions regarding the costs of expansion, student-teacher ratio and other variables; and the need for new infrastructure. The detailed breakdown of the financial estimate is provided in the National Plan of Action.

In addition, provinces will need to budget for the implementation of province-specific action plans. Currently, provinces are in process of refining their action plans and cost estimates. However, the provinces plan to cover the cost of these plans through existing government and donor budgets. As a whole, the Government has committed to increasing spending on education from 2% of GDP to 4% of GDP gradually in the subsequent years.