

# Goal 11

## SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

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## Country Context

Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the fifth largest population on the planet with 213.6 million people,<sup>1</sup> is a sovereign state situated in a geo-strategic location at the junction of middle East and central Asia. Bereft of Quaid's dream for a welfare state, social development has been off the mark with 22.4 million Out of School Children,<sup>2</sup> 56.3% Out of Pocket Expenditure in health,<sup>3</sup> and 29.5% population living below poverty line.<sup>4</sup> Exclusionist policy patterns marginalizing governance has led to country ranking at 147<sup>th</sup> out of 188 in Human Development Index<sup>5</sup> and 143<sup>rd</sup> out of 144<sup>th</sup> in Global Gender Gap Index.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, marginalization of key strategic sectors has led to funding diversions away from social development, barely allocating 3% of the GDP each for Education, Health and Social protection.<sup>7</sup>

With a GDP of \$279 billion (2017 est.),<sup>8</sup> Pakistan is categorized as a lower middle-income country. Economic stability has been a constant uphill battle with public debts and liabilities escalating up to 74% of GDP.<sup>9</sup> The country is ranked at 171 out of 188 countries in terms of GDP per capita (PPP) of \$5,400 (2017 est.)<sup>10</sup> while unemployment stands at 6% without factoring in statistics from informal economy which employs almost 70% of the country's workforce.<sup>11</sup> Gini index estimates 30.7% inequality with disparities as wide as the income share held by the lowest 10% at 4% against that of the top 10% at 26% (2013 est.)<sup>12</sup> in Pakistan.

In hindsight, political institutions in their formative years - mainly adapted from the colonial rump - were barely able to withstand extraconstitutional maneuvers<sup>13</sup> in the absence of a strong nation-building consciousness. This resulted in successive instability of civilian governments followed by political proxies and status-quo representatives, beguiling under democratic pretexts. Weak democratic structures led to the absentia of populace from democratic processes and crippled country prospects in socio-economic and political spheres with implications long into its future. This is evident of the country rankings at 110<sup>th</sup> in Democracy Index<sup>14</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> among Failed States rankings in 2018.<sup>15</sup> Fret over it not though, for Quaid's optimism guides our course:

*The story of Pakistan, its struggle and its achievement, is the very story of great human ideals, struggling to survive in the face of great odds and difficulties.<sup>i</sup>*

Amid international isolationism, national calamities and social fragmentation, democratization of state and social institutions is the moral and political imperative. It is essential that we promote critical education and discourse to bring forth analysis that helps adequately influence policy mandates for a just, peaceful and prosperous Pakistan.

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<sup>i</sup> M.A. Jinnah, Address to the people in Chittagong, March 23, 1948

## **Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Pakistan is the fifth most populated country in the world with a 64% of young population. It is one of the most rapidly urbanizing countries in South Asia with its urban bulk increasing from 43 million in 1998 to 75 million in 2017. More than 47% of Pakistan's urban population lives in 9 major cities. This has exerted massive pressure on the institutions to cope with provision of education, health, housing units, safe drinking water, sanitation and other facilities to its urban population. This is compounded by the inadequacy of solid waste management, traffic and environmental pollution posing serious challenges for urban populations and the management. None of the major cities in Pakistan meets WHO air quality standards. Climate Change is another critical element with Pakistan frequently experiencing extreme weather events that could exacerbate posing serious threats to these urban populations.

The country requires:

- 1. Equitable financing across tiers of governance, especially city governments, to meet increasing developmental demands**
- 2. Successful pilot projects for waste management and traffic, funded by foreign donors, need to be upscaled by provincial governments**
- 3. Increasing energy demands need to be met with tapping clean and renewable energy sources**
- 4. Public expenditure in social development needs to be enhanced to uplift education, health and life standards**
- 5. Climate Resilient urban planning needs to be a key consideration parallel with discourse on deurbanization**
- 6. Cost-effective housing units with climate resilient planning need to be introduced for sustainable settlements**
- 7. Sustainable transportation projects need to be introduced to address traffic congestion in urban settings**

## **References**

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