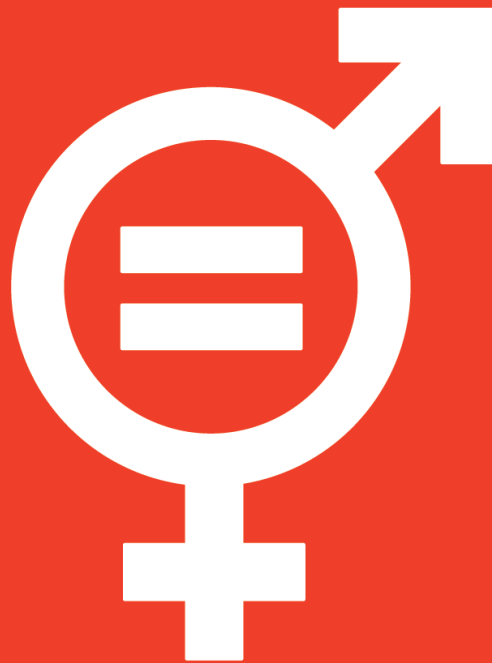


Goal 5

GENDER EQUALITY

5

GENDER
EQUALITY



Country Context

Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the fifth largest population on the planet with 213.6 million people,¹ 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,² 56.3% Out of Pocket Expenditure in health,³ and 29.5% population living below poverty line.⁴ Exclusionist policy patterns marginalizing governance has led to country ranking at 147th out of 188 in Human Development Index⁵ and 143rd out of 144th in Global Gender Gap Index.⁶ 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.⁷

With a GDP of \$279 billion (2017 est.),⁸ 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.⁹ The country is ranked at 171 out of 188 countries in terms of GDP per capita (PPP) of \$5,400 (2017 est.)¹⁰ while unemployment stands at 6% without factoring in statistics from informal economy which employs almost 70% of the country's workforce.¹¹ 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.)¹² in Pakistan.

In hindsight, political institutions in their formative years - mainly adapted from the colonial rump - were barely able to withstand extraconstitutional maneuvers¹³ 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 110th in Democracy Index¹⁴ and 20th among Failed States rankings in 2018.¹⁵ 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.ⁱ

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.

ⁱ M.A. Jinnah, Address to the people in Chittagong, March 23, 1948

Gender Equality

In Pakistan, a host of factors have contributed to dismal gender indicators which have persisted through decades of exclusion entrenched in patriarchal fundamentalisms. The exclusionist patterns impede women's access to information, services and participation across social, economic and political spheres of social functioning evident of country ranking at second-worst in the world (143rd out of 144) on Global Gender Gap index¹⁶ and 130th on Gender Inequality Index.¹⁷ Further, lack of knowledge of constitutional guarantees amongst women, curbed access to justice, feminization of poverty, reduced access and control over resources, mal-governance, institutionalized discrimination and violence against women have kept them far behind. Gender based violence is estimated at 10,000 reported cases of domestic violence per year¹⁸ while a combined 64,777 cases of sexual violence, honor crimes, burning cases, domestic violence, suicide and kidnapping between 2004-2016 in Pakistan.¹⁹ This is worsened by several regressive legislative precedents and organized opposition to gender equality initiatives mainly by fundamentalist and populist forces epitomizing patriarchal status-quo. Post-devolution, despite the passage of various laws pertaining to women's rights, the progress has been uneven across provinces while implementation remains a wide-spread challenge. The following will be central to the country commitment against SDG 5.

- 1. Gender equality, a cross-cutting theme in the SDGs, must be recognized as means and an end towards the foundation of a socially just and democratic society.**
- 2. Development Indicators must measure the extent and effectiveness of enforceable legislation, gender-just policies, fiscal allocations, institutional measures and outcome-focused actions for women and girls, as per country commitment to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA).**
- 3. Mainstream political representation for women should be emphasized to avoid their constituency being prone to puppeteering tactics regulated by quota systems.**
- 4. Proactive policy action followed by serious political should be mobilized to emphasize and enhance quality, not just the quantity, of women across political processes.**
- 5. Gender equality initiatives need to be emphasized both in policy, institutional and social practice in education, health and economic activity.**
- 6. Violence against women should be dealt with strong punitive actions and social condemnation. Anti-women practices like Early/Forced marriages and honor killings need to be penalized and condemned across all provinces.**
- 7. Women's access to and control over resources needs to be improved, specially women's ownership of property.**

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