

Civil Society Perspective on Official VNR 2022 vis-a-vis SDGs 4 & 5

July, 2022



AwazCDS-Pakistan: Established in 1995 and is registered as not for profit organization with registrar joint stock companies under Societies Registration Act 1860 and enjoys special consultative status with United Nation's Economic & Social Council (UN ECOSOC). AwazCDS-Pakistan's core mission is to develop integrated and innovative solutions in cooperation with partners at all levels to secure the future of marginalised communities especially by creating rightful spaces and choices of life. For more information please visit www.awazcde.org.pk

Conceived & Prepared by:	AwazCDS-Pakistan
Facilitated by:	Education Champion Network - Pakistan
Supported by:	Malala Fund
Launch Date:	July, 2022



Country facts and figures	
Population	Pakistan Population 2022 (Live) 235,976,122
Global Index Score (SDR 2022)	59.3
Global Index Rank (SDR 2022)	125 out of 163
SDG 4 trend (SDR 2022)	➡ Stagnating
SDG 5 trend (SDR 2022)	➡ Stagnating
Human Development Index (HDI) 2019	154 out of 189
Income group	Lower middle income
Average expenditure on education as per share of GDP (2015-16 to 2020-21)	1.96%

Background of Pakistan on SDGs:

Pakistan is the first country that adopted SDGs as national development agenda in February 2016. Pakistan has formed specialized SDGs units at the Federal, provincial, and special areas to accelerate the progress on SDGs. The government of Pakistan have presented the first VNR in July 2019. The VNR was prepared by Planning Commission of Pakistan in collaboration with aligned ministries. Later, the government again decided to go for the second VNR in 2021, however the decision was taken back afterwards. Now, in 2022 the GoP had again decided to present the second VNR to present

during UNHLPF 2022. As usual, the Planning Commission of Pakistan (PCP) has been assigned this task to lead the VNR process and prepare report. PCP also shared the process to conduct VNR of SDGs with concerned stakeholders including CSOs. Three ministries including Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ministry of Human Rights and Ministry of Climate Change have been given lead to engage with concerned stakeholders. The government decided to consider all SDGs for VNR whereas the UNHLPF has prioritized SDG 4, 5, 14, 15 and 17 for reporting in 2022. Though the report was not disclosed to any stakeholder before it got presented on 15th of July, 2022 at UNHLPF. In order to ensure CSOs perspective and feedback on priority goals particularly SDGs 4 & 5, AwazCDS-Pakistan engaged with education champions/ECN member organizations and other civil society of the country to prepare an analysis of Government reporting and CSOs perspective on that. It also helped in preparing an inclusive statement on behalf of CSOs, and education champions/ECN at HLPF 2022.

Country and Education Context: Education in Pakistan is administered by the Federal Ministry of Education and the provincial governments, whereas the federal government mostly assists in curriculum development, accreditation and in the financing of research and development. Article 25-A of Constitution of Pakistan obligates the state to provide free and compulsory quality education to children of the age group 5 to 16 years. **"The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such a manner as may be determined by law"**

The literacy rate ranges from 82% in Islamabad to 23% in the Torghar District¹. Literacy rates vary by gender and region, more than half the population of the seven tribal districts remains illiterate and only 22pc of the population has studied up to the primary level, whereas, the literacy rate in Azad Kashmir was 91.34%³. Despite these statistics, Pakistan still has low literacy rate with 62.3⁴ and Pakistan also has the second largest out of school population (22.8 million children) after Nigeria. The challenges have further worsened due to COVID-19 pandemic. The devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused

¹ "Pakistan Social And Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2019-20.

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1643852> (2021)

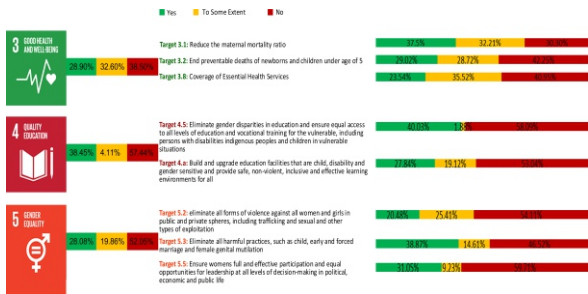
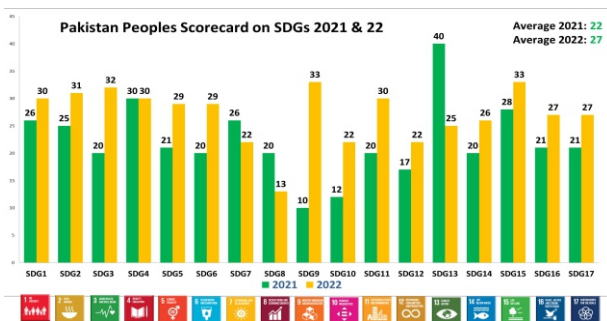
³ "Aik at a Glance 2019" (PDF). Archived (PDF) from the original on May 6, 2021.

⁴ <http://mofept.gov.pk/ProjectDetail/NjQ4ZTg2NjltOWM2NC00Y2IsLTkzMDEtMjU2OTFhMjA4NzNh#:~:text=The%20current%20literacy%20rate%20of,enhance%20the%20national%20literacy%20rate.>

nationwide school closures and notable impacts on the educational system and learning outcomes were observed.

CSOs Perspective on Official VNR 2022: Government has shared a number of good progress that has been made in recent times including different measures that have been taken at federal and provincial levels to enhance the quality standards of education. These measures include improving access to education by establishing new schools, upgrading existing schools, improving learning environment by providing basic facilities, promoting distance learning, capacity building of teachers and improving hiring and recruitment mechanisms for teachers in all subjects particularly science subjects. In VNR reporting on SDG 4, Government is presenting the enrollment rate as a success while according to the UNICEF's country profile 2022 shares that adjusted net attendance rate for children of primary school age is only 62% whereas, it further drops at middle and secondary level to 33%⁵.

SDG 4, focuses on equitable quality education for all was adopted as a Category 1 priority goal and SDG5 as a Category II by National Economic Council of Pakistan. However, only nine years remaining to 2030, the federal and provincial governments have not yet been able to prioritize their education budgeting as per SDG targets. According to people scorecard 2021 & 2022 conducted by Pakistan Development Alliance, the education is stagnant with a score of 30 for both years.



According to the same scorecard, 57.44% citizens across the country are not satisfied on the current state of affairs and quality of education in the country as resulted through SDGs Citizen's Scorecard⁶.

As per the SDGs Citizen Index citizens of all the provinces and regions confirm that SDGs 4 leads in terms of progress as compared to other critical goals

including SDGs 5, 10 and 16. <https://sdgscitizenscorecard.pda.net.pk/sdgs-citizen-index/>. Furthermore SDGs Citizens Priority Index shows that all people of all the provinces and regions except A J & K and Punjab placed SDG4 at their top priority whereas A J & K and Punjab declared SDG1 as their top priority. <https://sdgscitizenscorecard.pda.net.pk/citizens-priority-sdgs/>. This may be due to the reason that situation of education is better in both regions.

CSOs appreciates that there have been improvements in strategies action plans, policies and legal frameworks. There are several initiatives taken by all provincial governments to minimize ghost schools and teacher's absenteeism. Moreover, NTS system for recruitment of teachers introduced. Monitoring and evaluation system have been improved. However, the scale of these initiatives as well as monitoring and transparency mechanisms needs strengthening. Despite some increase in the education budgets, the administrative budgets are consumed while development budgets lapse. There are still ghost schools in Balochistan and according to Punjab School Education Department, around 100,000 positions of teachers

⁵ <https://data.unicef.org/country/pak/#education>

⁶ <https://sdgscitizenscorecard.pda.net.pk/>.

are vacant in Punjab province only. At the same time, **CSOs also shares concern over not highlighting the scope of work in education sector** in official VNR report as thirty-two percent (32%) of primary school age girls are out of school, compared with 21% of boys. This gender gap differential persists into middle school, and by grade nine merely 13% of young women are still enrolled in school. The insufficient supply of middle and high schools within accessible distance is a major barrier for girls in rural areas. Similarly, the lack of adequate sanitation facilities particularly impacts girls' retention rates in middle and high schools. Girls from poor communities living in remote, rural areas are more vulnerable and drop out increases when they hit puberty due to fear of harassment, social stigmas and disapproval. CSOs also stressed on adapting climate smart models to keep our students and schools' safe where government is not investing yet, though it is one the biggest challenge of students drop out and learning losses.

CSOs appreciates the Government for being open and truthful regarding the lower female participation and lower employment in the public and private sector especially is the overall environment which is not conducive for females to work. It includes inadequate rooms, washroom, parking, behavior etc. Official VNR reports also shares progress in the development and passage of several laws support women empowerment and protecting from Gender Based Violence. CSOs also have this perspective that prioritization of SDG 5 and passing of several national and provincial legislations show that gender is considered important aspect for social, economic and political development for the Government of Pakistan but majorly these legislations and acts are either on paper or mostly without rules of business therefore in practice situation is dissatisfied. There are numerous barriers for women to access to quality education, fulfilling empowerment goals and entering in economic activities, access to health and reproductive and justice are only a few barriers. Gender based violence is rampant in Pakistani society and reports say that has increased during COVID 19. Moreover, domestic abuse and violence, honor killings, sexual violence to institutional discrimination are almost accepted norms.

Civil society also emphasis that women, transgender and PWDs and minorities face systematic and structural discrimination. Besides, discrimination against Trans-persons and women PWDs is intersectional and are even more exposed to all forms of violence. Pakistan stands second last country after Afghanistan as the most dangerous country for women, rated by World Economic Forum this year. CSOs also share fear of not including transgender anywhere while talking about SDG5 in VNR official report. Although a number of legislation is mentioned in this SDG regarding women, girls and children but not transgender Protection Act 2018. This also reflects the gap in understanding about this gender under Gender Equality.

Child marriages is still rampant regardless of progressive and women centered legislations in country. Women and transgender face massive opposition from Council of Islamic Ideology when a progressive legislation tables for them. Men in Pakistan continue to play a decision-making role in women's access to healthcare including their utilization of healthcare services even in the event of an emergency. Cultural barriers also include restrictions on young girls' mobility and this also causes their drop out from schools. Demanding for sexual and reproductive health and independence in decision making is almost considered disloyalty and shameful.

In conclusion, CSOs have this perspective that Sustainable Development Ranking Report 2022⁷ is showing that SDGs 4 and 5 are stagnant and not improving compared to last report. This also mirrors the lack of initiatives and financing to improve both sectors. Governments and all stakeholders should invest more in country's 48% of population to minimize disparities to at least achieve near to half of the SDGs targets by 2030.

⁷ <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/>

Key Messages and Recommendations

1. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, and meet its commitment that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
2. Need to improve mobility of females to reach educational institutions by substantial increase in budgets and special initiatives to curb gender disparities in education.
3. Align the 'Inclusive Education System,' as defined by the Article 25-A, National Education Policy 2009 and the UN CRPD, and improve the laws and policies in the country to ensure genuine inclusive education for all learners with disabilities.
4. Institutionalize students' participation in school governance and endeavors by involving them in decision-making processes and providing opportunity to secondary student representatives in the consultative meetings on education related policies.
5. Increase the education budget up to 4% of GDP, which will allow an increase in the number of schools, adequate facilities, trained, qualified teachers, better school environment and climate resilient infrastructure.
6. Develop strong inter departmental coordination with other related departments like Climate, Health, Environment, Gender etc. to identify key learning opportunities and establish partnerships for whole of student approach.
7. Establishing a mechanism to review curriculum with contemporary lens to include concepts like global citizenship, right to freedom of opinion and expression and driven by the universal values of tolerance, pluralism, equality, non-discrimination and complete elimination of hate speech.
8. Integrate life skills based education in schools and other educational institutions to promote protection and gender equality.
9. Immediate need to do gender responsive budgeting and build gender responsive infrastructure to make schools safer for all.
10. Establish quality and disaggregated data collection system.
11. Effective implementation of legal frameworks that ensure women are participating in the social economic and political spheres based on equality principles. As well as put concerted efforts in taking legal and policy measures and their implementation in ending all forms of discrimination against all women. Special measures for protection and mainstreaming of Transgender persons and PLWDs and monitories in developmental processes.
12. In order to effective implementation of SDGs, government should demonstrate greater political will and commitment for diverse partnerships at national and international levels and provide resources and expertise for inclusive social and economic development.

Annex 1: Statement of CSOs on VNR at HLPF 2022

CSO Statement on Pakistan VNR at HLPF2022 (Finalized June 30th 2022)

Thank you, Chair,

We congratulate the Govt. of Pakistan for its reported progress on the 2030 Agenda. However, several concerns remain on critical SDG priorities in the absence of policy coherence and efficient implementation & review mechanisms.

The civil society would like to ask:

1. How is the government addressing regressions and stagnation on critical goals including inequalities, hunger, justice, education, SRHR, gender equality and climate change?
2. How does the government ensure that the most marginalized like the poorest, women & girls, Transgenders, religious & sexual minorities, farmers, laborers, and persons with disabilities are not left behind in public sector development programs?
3. How is the government ensuring protection of journalists, human rights and environmental activists facing persecution, cyber bullying, harassment and forced disappearances?

We ranked 129th on the SDGs Index. Despite COVID 19 recovery measures, the country still faces vaccine apartheid and fragility of health systems exacerbated by IFI induced conditionalities. The absence of a comprehensive Animal Disease Surveillance mechanism poses further threats to human health and food security in a country heavily reliant on agriculture and livestock.

The 22+ million children are Out Of School including most of them are girls, demands holistic planning, equitable financing, and stronger political will to enhance the educational outcomes prioritizing the millions left behind. The allocation of at least 4-6% of GDP or 20-25% of public expenditure must be ensured to protect peoples' fundamental right to education, as per Article 25A.

Gender Equality requires multi-sectoral gender-sensitive planning based on comprehensive vulnerability assessment through data disaggregation for achieving gender-responsive social protection, health and education outcomes, protection from violence and disasters, and protection of right to inheritance, employability and political participation.

Land grabbing, displacement through mega infrastructure projects, and corporate control have detrimental effects on farmers' livelihood and biodiversity. Agroecologist and genuine agrarian reforms are critical to address land degradation, deforestation and desertification. We demand a neo-liberal-free future to avoid the planetary crises and restore our rights to land and livelihood.

Protection of civic spaces and democratic accountability require CSOs' meaningful inclusion across agenda-setting and planning processes to avoid tokenistic representation. Inclusive multilateralism requires support for the countries left behind strangled by Sovereign debt, Illicit financial flows and unfulfilled Official Development Assistance and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities commitments. We need a world that is considerate of our collective concerns upholding the ideals we all believe in.

I thank you.



GIRLS & WOMEN ARE AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT

IMPROVE
HEALTH

BENEFIT
FAMILIES

INCREASE
PRODUCTIVITY

STRENGTHEN
ECONOMIES

Create Resilient
& Sustainable
Nations

REDUCE
HUNGER

Awaz Foundation Pakistan

Awaz CDS

Centre for Development Services

Awaz Foundation Pakistan : Centre for Development Services

Website: www.awazcds.org.pk, www.pda.net.pk

Email: info@awazcds.org.pk