

December 31, 2025



## YEAR IN REVIEW

2025 has been a defining year for Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services (AwazCDS-Pakistan). Throughout the year, the organization worked across provinces and at national and international levels to advance labour rights, democratic governance, social protection, education, and Civic Society strengthening & civic freedoms. Through sustained policy advocacy, evidence-based research, and community engagement, AwazCDS-Pakistan contributed to meaningful reforms, strengthened institutional accountability, and amplified the voices of marginalized communities, particularly women workers, youth, and civil society actors.

From influencing labour law reforms and advocating corporate due diligence at the European Parliament, to strengthening local governments, expanding social protection access, promoting girls' education, and safeguarding civic space through the Pakistan Civic Space Monitor, AwazCDS-Pakistan's interventions reflected a comprehensive and rights-based approach to development and democracy. These efforts were reinforced through strong collaboration with civil society platforms, including the Pakistan Development Alliance (PDA), comprising over 130 member organizations that have remained consistently engaged and cooperative in advancing shared objectives.

This Yearly Journal highlights the key achievements, thematic initiatives, policy engagements, and collective actions that defined AwazCDS-Pakistan's work in 2025, while looking ahead to sustaining momentum, strengthening coordination, and advancing inclusive governance, labour rights, and civic freedoms in the years ahead.

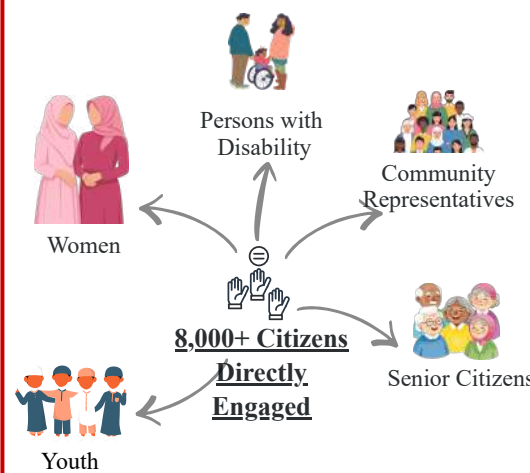
## KEY HIGHLIGHTS



**07 Major Projects Implemented**



**05+ National Studies and Policy Papers Produced**



**50+ Civil Society Organizations and Government Departments Engaged**



**50+ Civic Space Incidents Documented and Tracked**



**30+ Women Education Champions Trained and Mobilized**

## FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



The year 2025 proved to be profoundly challenging for the people of Pakistan, particularly with regard to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Constitutional institutions, including Parliament and the Judiciary, increasingly appeared constrained in their effective functioning, following the passage of the 26th Amendment and subsequently the 27th Amendment—developments that marked a serious blow to the rule of law in the country.

In such a constrained environment, civil society space continued to shrink, severely limiting the ability of rights-based organizations to raise their voices against widespread human rights violations and to advance democratic and constitutional values. Despite these limitations, our efforts remained focused on promoting the socio-economic and political empowerment of marginalized communities—particularly formal and informal workers, destitute women, older persons, and other socially excluded groups—through evidence-based advocacy and grassroots engagement.

By generating local evidence on the state of labour rights, social protection, and fundamental freedoms, we were able to contribute to policy discourse and push for meaningful reforms. These efforts supported greater sensitization of duty bearers and policymakers toward long-neglected rights. Notably, the inclusion of agricultural workers within the Labour Code 2024, recognizing them as formal workers, stands as a significant policy achievement of AwazCDS-Pakistan and its partners, including the Pakistan Development Alliance. Additionally, the increase in stipends for girls enrolled in secondary education represents another important milestone, reinforcing our commitment to advancing gender equality and social justice.

As the year concludes, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the AwazCDS-Pakistan team, partners, and collaborators who contributed to the organization's work during 2025. Their dedication and professionalism enabled the continuation of initiatives across diverse thematic and geographic areas.

Looking ahead, AwazCDS-Pakistan remains committed to strengthening partnerships, enhancing institutional capacity, and contributing positively to inclusive and sustainable development in Pakistan.

**Mr. Zia ur Rehman**  
**Founder and Chief Executive**  
**Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services**  
**National Convener, Pakistan Development Alliance**



**DRAFT**  
**THE PUNJAB LABOUR CODE, 2024**

**CHAPTER 4.2 – AGRICULTURE WORKERS**

**213. Definitions. –**

(1) In this Chapter, unless the context requires otherwise–

- (a) "agriculture" means and includes all activities related to cultivation of crops, animal husbandry, poultry, livestock rearing, apiculture, gardening, fishing, aquaculture, sericulture, vermiculture, horticulture, floriculture, agro-forestry, tree plantation, orchards, or any other farming activity or related post-farm activity carried out through self-employment, tenorial cultivation, share cropping, or other types of cultivation including shifting cultivation, collection, use and sale of minor or non-timber forest produce by virtue of ownership rights or usufructuary rights, but does not include subsistence farming;
- (b) "agricultural establishment" for the purpose of this Code, means an establishment engaged in any form of agricultural activity; and
- (c) "agricultural worker" means any person who, individually or jointly with any other person, paid or unpaid, on land owned or held by the worker or worker's family or anyone else, and for any duration of time, engages in agriculture directly or through the supervision of others.

**214. Rights of agricultural workers. –**

- (1) An agricultural worker shall receive pay in cash or kind, for any agricultural work undertaken individually, or as part of a family unit, considering the working hours and the minimum wage rates applicable in the province.
- (2) Part II of this Code applies to agricultural workers, regardless of whether they are currently engaged directly or indirectly (through labour contractors or male family members), paid or unpaid family help, or are engaged in agricultural work as part of any other arrangements.
- (3) An agricultural worker shall receive a written agreement setting out the terms of the engagement, including the rights in this section if the worker so demands.
- (4) The provisions of sections 139 and 140 shall, mutatis mutandis, apply to the agreement under sub-section (3).

## KEY POLICY AND ADVOCACY ACHIEVEMENTS

### Legal Recognition of Women Agricultural Workers in Punjab

Under the Creating an Enabling Environment for Women Agricultural Workers project, supported by FORUM-Asia, AwazCDS-Pakistan played a key role in advancing policy reforms leading to the inclusion of agricultural workers in the Punjab Labour Code 2024. Through sustained advocacy and engagement with the Provincial Stakeholders Alliance, the organization contributed a critical analysis of Chapter 4.2 of the Labour Code, highlighting gaps related to wages, written contracts, individual remuneration, freedom of association, and protections for women workers. The Punjab Labour Department formally acknowledged the analysis and committed to incorporating AwazCDS-Pakistan's recommendations in future revisions, marking a significant step toward strengthening labour rights for women agricultural workers.

### European Parliament Advocacy on Labour Rights and Due Diligence

AwazCDS-Pakistan engaged with Members of the European Parliament in Brussels and Stockholm to advocate for strong and enforceable Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) provisions. The organization highlighted concerns that any amendments weakening civil liability, stakeholder engagement, or climate transition planning would undermine supply chain accountability. The advocacy emphasized ongoing labour rights violations in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan, including denial of minimum wages and limited access to social security. A joint study conducted by AwazCDS-Pakistan and Swedwatch was also shared with Parliamentarians to inform policy discussions.





## Community Voices



Women Agricultural Workers

'We get only one day off if we are sick or if someone dies and wages are not paid for off days.'

— Woman Agricultural Worker, Punjab

'We cannot raise our voices. Even when worried or upset, we cannot speak up. We can tell our husbands but no one else. We cannot express our plight.'

— Woman Agricultural Worker, Sindh

“There’s a lot of secrecy about where exactly the products end up. We only know that they’re shipped to big international buyers, possibly large retail chains or luxury brands.”



“Overtime hours are not clearly tracked, leading to disputes over payments. Workers often feel cheated when promised rates are not honored.”



“The [complaint] process feels intimidating and ineffective, so I prefer not to raise complaints even when there are serious issues”

Textile and Garment Workers

## Community Voices



“I come from a feudal background where girls’ education was discouraged. Through persistence and strong academic performance, I was able to change my family’s mindset and move from Dera Ghazi Khan to Lahore to complete my Bachelor’s degree. My powerful decision broke this long-standing trend, and today more girls in my family are being sent to school for their education.” Girls’ Education Champion | Dera Ghazi Khan

“I am the first woman in my family to complete a Master’s degree through private education. My mother quietly supported me bringing me books and taking me to examination centers without anyone else knowing. She understood the power of education and helped me overcome barriers that once seemed impossible.” Girls’ Education Champion | Bhakkar



“We are four sisters and one brother from a lower-middle-class family where sons are usually prioritized. Despite social pressure to invest only in our brother, my father stood firm and ensured equal education for all his daughters. Today, we all four sisters are educated with the unmatched support from our father.” Girls’ Education Champion | Khanewal



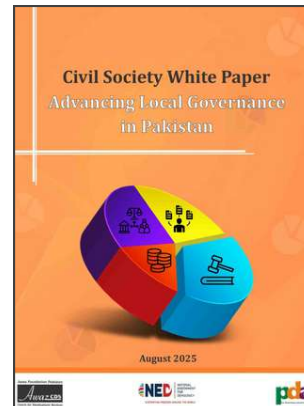
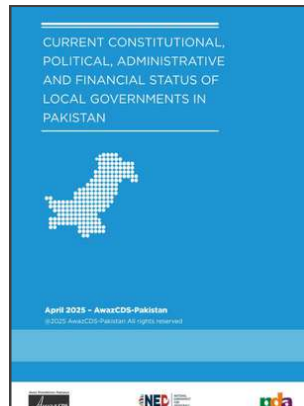


## OUR WORK

### Strengthening Local Governments to Promote Democracy in Pakistan

750 People –  
Reached & engaged

In 2025, AwazCDS Pakistan undertook initiatives to enhance the political, administrative, and financial capacities of local governments, contributing to stronger democratic practices across the country. A comprehensive study was conducted to assess the status and functioning of local governance structures, providing evidence for informed decision-making.



Based on the findings, the organization developed national and provincial white papers on local governance reforms, aimed at guiding policy development and institutional improvements. Consultative dialogues were facilitated with policymakers and civil society actors to advance the effective implementation of Article 140-A, ensuring that local governments are more responsive and accountable to citizens.

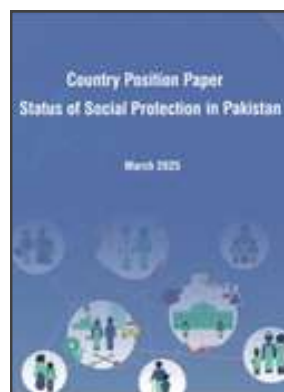
In parallel, citizens and youth were mobilized through awareness activities and civic engagement initiatives, fostering participation and advocacy at the community level. These efforts collectively strengthened the foundations of local democracy and created opportunities for more inclusive governance.

In 2025, AwazCDS Pakistan worked to strengthen social protection systems and enhance community access to essential services. A comprehensive country position paper on social protection was developed, assessing the current status of social protection in Pakistan and providing actionable recommendations for policymakers.

Surveys and capacity-building sessions were conducted for community leaders and civil society organizations in Punjab and Sindh, aiming to raise awareness and equip local actors with the knowledge to support vulnerable populations. These initiatives were complemented by the National People's Assembly 2025, which provided a platform for dialogue on inclusive social protection policies.

### Civil Society Calls for Universal Social Protection Floors

5,000 People –  
Facilitated & assisted



To improve access at the grassroots level, AwazCDS Pakistan established social protection helpdesks in Sukkur, Sindh, and Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, offering guidance and assistance to citizens seeking to benefit from social protection schemes. These efforts collectively contributed to greater inclusivity, awareness, and practical support for communities across the country.



Help Desk - Punjab



## OUR WORK

### Women Agricultural Workers' Support Initiative

200 Participants—  
Reached & engaged

In 2025, AwazCDS Pakistan focused on promoting the rights and recognition of women agricultural workers in Punjab and Sindh. Provincial Stakeholder Alliance (PSA) meetings were conducted to discuss key labor issues, including the Rights of Women Agricultural Workers (ROBS of SWAW) in Sindh and the Punjab Labour Code 2024.



The organization facilitated policy advocacy meetings with provincial authorities and carried out community engagement sessions to ensure women agricultural workers were informed of their rights and entitlements. These efforts helped strengthen collaboration between government bodies, civil society, and local communities.

As part of the initiative, women agricultural workers in Punjab were actively engaged in celebratory and awareness events to acknowledge their formal recognition under the Punjab Labour Code 2024. This initiative fostered greater empowerment and visibility for women in the agricultural workforce.

In 2025, AwazCDS Pakistan undertook initiatives to promote girls' education across Punjab, addressing both access and retention challenges. A national study titled "Economic Cost of Out-of-School Girls: Estimating Pakistan's Losses from Incomplete Secondary Education" was conducted to provide evidence on the socio-economic impact of educational exclusion. Complementary IEC material was also developed to highlight the status of education in the country.

The organization facilitated a multi-stakeholder task force to advocate for enhanced educational stipends under Zewar-e-Taleem and Waseela-e-Taleem (BISP), ensuring that policy measures aligned with the needs of vulnerable girls and their families. These efforts fostered collaboration between government authorities, civil society, and communities.

### Strengthening Girls' Education in Punjab

50 Participants— Reached  
& engaged



To strengthen community-level advocacy, a network of over 30 Women Education Champions from 16 districts of Punjab was mobilized. These champions led awareness campaigns and outreach activities, empowering communities to actively support girls' education and improve retention rates in local schools.



Women Education Champions Leading Community Awareness Campaigns in Punjab



## OUR WORK

### Enabling Environment for Civil Society in Pakistan

100 Participants– Sensitized & reached

In 2025, AwazCDS Pakistan focused on strengthening the enabling environment for civil society across the country. An Early Warning Mechanism (EWM) was implemented to systematically track and assess incidents affecting civic space, ensuring timely documentation and analysis of challenges faced by civil society actors.

Over the year, more than 50 civic space incidents related to freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly were documented and verified. This evidence-based approach allowed AwazCDS Pakistan to maintain an accurate understanding of the evolving civic landscape and identify areas requiring attention or intervention.

To support coordinated advocacy, the organization shared timely alerts and findings with national and international stakeholders, facilitating informed policy dialogue and collaborative efforts to protect and expand civic space. These initiatives reinforced the capacity of civil society to operate effectively and safely while advancing democratic engagement.



During 2024–2025, AwazCDS Pakistan successfully implemented the sixth cycle of the National Platforms Project (NPP), focusing on enhancing coordination, strategic planning, and advocacy among member organizations. A five-year strategic plan and accompanying Communication & Advocacy Strategy were developed through a highly participatory process involving over 50 member organizations.

The process emphasized inclusive consultation, ensuring that the perspectives and priorities of all members were reflected in the strategic direction of the platform. This collaborative approach strengthened ownership and alignment across the network, enabling more effective advocacy and programmatic planning.

### National Platforms Project (NPP) – Cycle 6

50

Participants – Reached & engaged



Through these efforts, AwazCDS Pakistan improved coordination between the secretariat and member organizations, enhancing internal planning, decision-making, and overall network engagement. The initiative reinforced the capacity of the platform to function as a cohesive, strategic, and impactful national network.





OUR WORK

Promoting Labour Rights in Pakistan’s Textile Sector

To ensure accessibility and broad awareness, policy briefs summarizing the study’s findings were published in both English and Urdu. These briefs highlighted the key challenges faced by textile workers, providing evidence to inform advocacy and policy dialogue.

The study documented critical issues, including low wages, unsafe working conditions, lack of formal contracts, limited social protection, workplace harassment, and a gender-pay gap. These findings have helped advance informed discussions on labor rights and continue to support initiatives aimed at improving working conditions in the textile sector.

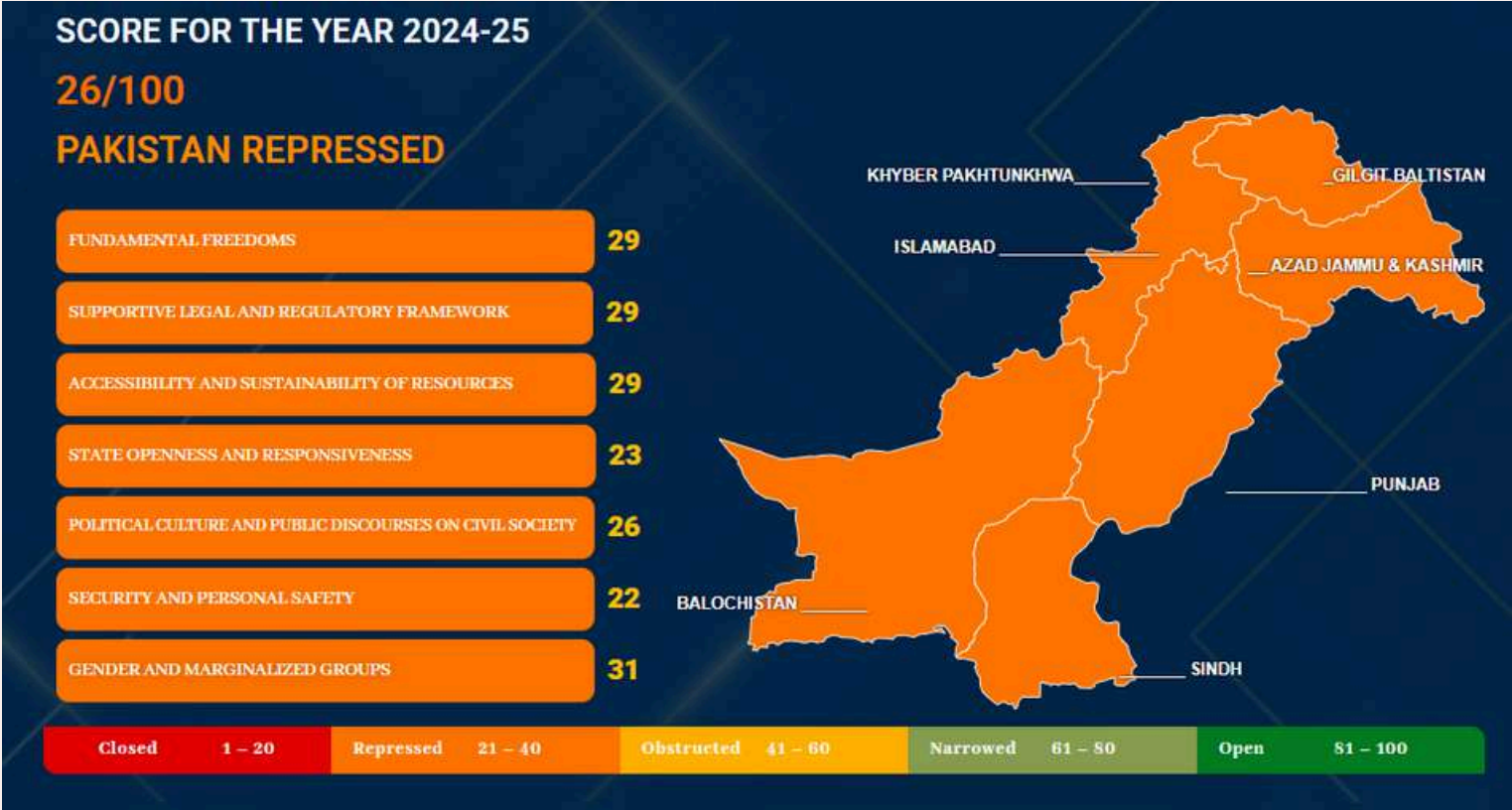
In 2025, AwazCDS Pakistan, in collaboration with Swedwatch and Home-Net Punjab, launched a comprehensive study on the rights of workers in the textile sector. Provincial events were organized in Lahore and Karachi to present the study and engage stakeholders, including policymakers, civil society actors, and worker representatives.



Pakistan Civic Space Monitor (PCSM)

The Pakistan Civic Space Monitor (PCSM) is a nationwide, evidence-based initiative designed to assess and track the state of civic freedoms and human rights in Pakistan. It addresses the growing need for credible local data on shrinking civic space, particularly in a context where international reports are often dismissed and reliable domestic evidence remains limited.

PCSM documents civic space conditions across all provinces and special regions using primary data from civil society, media, trade unions, academia, and humanitarian actors. Updated annually on 10 December, the monitor provides national and provincial civic space scores that inform policy dialogue, strengthen collective advocacy, and support efforts to protect and reclaim civic space in Pakistan.



## REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PARTICIPATION



Chiang Mai Global Governance Forum 2025 (SDG-16+), in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 11–17 January 2025.



Civil 7 (C7) Canada 2025, in Ottawa, Canada, from 14–16 April 2025.



IUCN General Council Meeting (International Union for Conservation of Nature), in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 9–15 October 2025.



Second World Social Summit for Social Development (WSSD-2), in Doha, Qatar, from 4–7 November 2025.



High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), in New York, United States, from 18–27 July 2025.



## REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PARTICIPATION



International Civil Society Week (ICSW) and Asia Democracy Assembly, in Bangkok, Thailand, from 28 October–2 November 2025.



AGNA–CIVICUS Alliance Strategy Development Meeting, in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, from 23–29 November 2025.



Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), in Bangkok, Thailand, in February 2025.



United Nations Civil Society Conference in support of the “Summit of the Future”, at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, in June 2025.



Leadership Development Programme, in Manila, Philippines, in July 2025.

## RESEARCH &amp; PUBLICATIONS

## Civil Society White Paper Advancing Local Governance in Pakistan



August 2025



## The Pioneer's Paradox

Local Governance in  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

## A Case of Centralised Control

Local Governance in ICT –  
Islamabad Capital Territory

## An Architecture of Control

Local Governance in  
Balochistan

## Legislative Motion Without Movement

Local Governance in Punjab



## Fragmented and Weak: The state of Local Government In Sindh

Civil Society White Paper on  
Local Governance in Sindh

## PUBLIC MONEY, PRIVATE HARM

The Role of EU Procurement in Perpetuating Labour Violations:  
Lessons from Pakistan and Sweden.

Report #105



## Country Position Paper Status of Social Protection in Pakistan

March 2025



Country Focus Report

## PAKISTAN

July 2025

EU SEE

SUPPORTING  
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT  
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

## CURRENT CONSTITUTIONAL, POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL STATUS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN PAKISTAN



April 2025 – AwazCDS-Pakistan

©2025 AwazCDS-Pakistan All rights reserved





## ADVOCACY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Recognising the growing influence of social media in shaping public discourse and policy conversations, AwazCDS-Pakistan strategically used digital platforms throughout to advance rights-based advocacy. Social media was leveraged as a key tool to raise awareness, disseminate evidence-based messages, and engage policymakers, civil society actors, media, and communities on critical social justice and governance issues.

Through coordinated digital campaigns aligned with international observance days and national advocacy priorities, AwazCDS-Pakistan amplified key messages on Education, Labour rights, Elimination of Violence against Women, health, social protection, and civic freedoms. These campaigns contributed to greater public visibility of structural challenges faced by marginalized groups, while encouraging dialogue, solidarity, and collective action.

### Key Themes Covered:

- Out-of-School Children and Barriers to Girls' Education
- #16DaysOfActivism for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- World AIDS Day
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- Human Rights Day
- Universal Health Coverage Day

In addition to thematic campaigns, AwazCDS-Pakistan maintained consistent social media engagement to highlight organizational activities, policy dialogues, research launches, stakeholder meetings, community engagements, and national-level events. These regular updates ensured visibility of ongoing initiatives, strengthened outreach to diverse audiences, and complemented offline advocacy by extending engagement beyond physical forums





## MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS



instagram

Log in Sign up



**mangobaaz** • Follow  
Original audio

**mangobaaz** 17w  
On this Malala Day, Zia ur Rehman, CEO Awaaz CDS and PDA, pays heartfelt tribute to the incredible journey and unwavering struggle of Malala Yousafzai — a symbol of courage, resilience, and hope for millions of girls worldwide.

In his powerful message, he emphasizes the urgent need to prioritize girls' education in Pakistan, remove barriers that hinder access to learning, and create enabling environments where every girl can thrive.

He emphasized that Malala's story is not just her own — it reflects the dreams and challenges of millions of girls still waiting for their right to education. It is our collective duty to dismantle the obstacles and invest in a future where education is a right, not a privilege.

The Nation 11  
November 11, 2023

### NATIONAL

Stakeholders stress rise in girls' education stipend in Punjab

Stakeholders at a meeting in Lahore today urged the Punjab government to increase the stipend for girls' education, saying it is crucial for the province to achieve its goal of 100% literacy by 2030. The meeting was organized by the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) and the Punjab Education Society (PES). The stakeholders, including representatives from the government, academia, and civil society, discussed the challenges of girls' education in Punjab and the need for a more supportive environment. They emphasized the importance of increasing the stipend to attract more girls to school and to ensure that they can continue their education without financial hardship. The meeting also highlighted the need for better infrastructure, trained teachers, and a safe learning environment for girls.

### Merit-based recruitment system institutionalized in KP: CM Afridi

Chief Minister Khuram Sherrano today announced that the merit-based recruitment system for government jobs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has been institutionalized. He said that the system, which was introduced in 2019, has been successfully implemented and is now a permanent feature of the province's recruitment process. The CM praised the efforts of the KP Public Service Commission (KP-PSC) and the KP Government for ensuring that the recruitment process is fair, transparent, and based on merit. He also mentioned that the system has helped to attract a large number of qualified candidates and has resulted in the recruitment of a significant number of government employees. The CM concluded by saying that the merit-based system is a testament to the commitment of the KP government to ensure that government jobs are filled with the best talent.



### Textile workers' rights under threat, study urges reforms

A new study by the DAWN (Dhawan) movement, a leading women's rights organization in Pakistan, has warned that the rights of textile workers are under threat. The study, titled 'Textile Workers' Rights Under Threat', highlights the challenges faced by women workers in the textile industry, including low wages, long hours, and unsafe working conditions. It also points out the lack of proper labor laws and enforcement mechanisms to protect their rights. The study calls for urgent reforms to strengthen labor laws and ensure that textile workers, especially women, are treated fairly and their rights are protected. It also emphasizes the need for better working conditions, including safe workplaces and access to basic amenities like clean water and electricity. The DAWN movement is currently campaigning for these reforms and is seeking support from the public and other organizations.

**DAWN**  
Dhawan

### Study reveals 'rampant' labour rights abuses in textile factories across Karachi and Faisalabad

The Provincial Advocacy Forum (PAF) has released a report titled 'Textile Workers' Rights Under Threat', which reveals 'rampant' labour rights abuses in textile factories across Karachi and Faisalabad. The report, based on a study conducted by the DAWN movement, highlights the challenges faced by women workers in the textile industry, including low wages, long hours, and unsafe working conditions. It also points out the lack of proper labor laws and enforcement mechanisms to protect their rights. The PAF is currently campaigning for these reforms and is seeking support from the public and other organizations. The report also mentions that the workers face discrimination and harassment from their employers and supervisors. It calls for the government to take immediate action to address these issues and ensure that the rights of textile workers are protected. The PAF is also organizing protests and rallies to draw attention to the plight of textile workers.

Provincial Advocacy Forum  
PAF

Shila | Published December 18, 2023



## OUR PARTNERS



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR  
DEMOCRACY

SUPPORTING FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD



**forus**

CONNECT  
SUPPORT  
INFLUENCE



Advancing human rights in business since 2003



**ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**



**Sightsavers**

AFFINITY GROUP OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

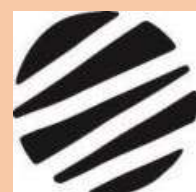
**AGNA**



**THE  
PEOPLE'S  
VACCINE**



**JANIC**



**Global  
Call to Action  
Against Poverty**

People Rising to End Inequal



EUROPEAN UNION



Global Health Strategies



**german  
cooperation**

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT



**TAP  
NETWORK**

Transparency, Accountability &  
Participation for 2030 Agenda

