



UNITED NATIONS
PAKISTAN اقوام متحدہ پاکستان
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Pakistan Common Country Analysis



United Nations Country Team
2020–2021

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CAT	Convention against Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CO₂	carbon dioxide
COVID-19	coronavirus disease
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ECE	early childhood education
ECCE	early childhood care and education
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FY18	fiscal year 2018
FY19	fiscal year 2019
FY20	fiscal year 2020
FY21–22	fiscal year 2021–2022
FY22	fiscal year 2022
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HBW	home-based worker
HDI	Human Development Index
HIES	Household Integrated Economic Survey
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple indicator Cluster Survey
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NCHR	National Commission for Human Rights
NNS	National Nutrition Survey
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PDHS	Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey
PKR	Pakistani Rupee
PPP	purchasing power parity
PSDP	Public Sector Development Programme



PSLM	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	small and medium-sized enterprises
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
US\$	United States Dollar
VAWG	violence against women and girls
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization



Introduction

This Common Country Analysis (CCA)¹ is the United Nations' independent assessment of the national context of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.² It examines the country's diverse socio-economic, demographic, political, cultural, climatic and environmental situation to understand where Pakistan stands and why, and the implications this has for development. Using the lens of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it analyses progress, challenges, gaps and ways forward in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Throughout, the CCA draws on the rich expertise and knowledge base of UN agencies active in Pakistan.

The report is divided into nine sections or focus areas:

Section 1, *Country context*, presents the overall context of economic, political and environmental development in Pakistan, bearing in mind the aims and aspirations of the 2030 Agenda. It captures the essence of the CCA's other sections to provide an integrated overall picture.

Section 2, *Progress on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs*, analyses Pakistan's progress on individual goals, grouped by the '5 Ps' that shape the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. It highlights whether the country is on track, slow, or facing challenges in the achievement of the SDGs. It recommends establishing governance and institutional mechanisms to accelerate progress on the SDGs, as well as ensuring data availability, innovative integrated responses and strong multisectoral partnerships among development stakeholders.

Section 3, *The SDG financing landscape*, sheds light on the resource requirements needed to finance the SDGs, and challenges in meeting these requirements. Although the SDGs are a national priority, this section reveals that Pakistan's overall resource envelope has not grown sufficiently. Reasons include weak tax administration, declining Official Development Assistance, heavy defence expenditure and the poor allocation of resources vis-a-vis the SDGs. It suggests possible practicable solutions for the Government to consider. These

include improving the efficiency of public spending, mobilizing the private sector through public-private partnerships, harnessing digital technologies and employing innovative mechanisms, such as 'debt swap', Islamic finance and social impact funds.

Section 4, *Leaving no one behind, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment*, makes the case for achieving the SDGs for everyone in Pakistan, especially the most vulnerable, poorest and hardest to reach. It delves into a number of drivers of vulnerability: economic drivers (such as unemployment), socio-cultural and geographic drivers (such as gender-based violence, disabilities, food insecurity and rapid urbanization), and institutional and political drivers (such as limited access to basic services, discriminatory laws, and limited data and oversight). It recommends that SDG targets should focus on *specific* people facing *specific* problems in *specific* places. The section highlights the need to make people in vulnerable situations more visible in statistics, particularly through disaggregated data, so that their concerns are reflected in policy decisions. This is vital to turn political commitments into action and minimize the humanitarian-development divide.

Section 5, *Multidimensional risks*, highlights how development frameworks often struggle to capture the multidimensional nature of important threats by confining themselves to a few major risks. This undermines development gains and resilience against many pressing risks. The section identifies potential risk areas that affect governance and economic stability in Pakistan. It highlights how limited democratic space weakens collective action by citizens and reduces accountability. It calls for improved socio-economic stability, which has a direct bearing on people's access to their rights – such as the right to work, to education and to health care. It emphasizes the urgent need to mainstream climate change in the development agenda. The section argues that political stability and a rights-based justice system are fundamental for guaranteeing people's rights and the effective functioning of democratic institutions. It also emphasizes the need to strengthen basic health services which tend to be overlooked during emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section 6, *Economic transformation*, examines Pakistan's overall economic situation. It focuses on



macro-indicators of growth and key facets of the economy, including agriculture, manufacturing and industry, labour and employment, and trade and investment. The section describes how economic growth has slowed, highlights its causes and pinpointing favourable trends. For instance, Pakistan has closed its current account deficit, primarily due to increased inflows (particularly remittances) and reduced import values. Nevertheless, challenges continue to affect the economy: weak governance, over-regulation, a lack of policy implementation, energy crises and the high cost of capital. The section recommends that the Government, among other measures, take full advantage of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and explore greater regional integration, especially with Central Asia. It encourages an increased focus on policies for green growth, the blue economy and digital transformation to promote and diversify industrial growth.

Section 7, *The environment and climate change*, emphasizes Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change. It explores how this contributes to low agricultural productivity, water scarcity, food insecurity, displacement, hunger and growing risks for populations in vulnerable situations. It identifies pressing barriers to the sustainable management of natural resources, including limited institutional capacities and coordination, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, uneven access to food, rapid urbanization, a lack of quality early warning systems, hazard monitoring and risk communication, limited data availability, and the weak integration of environmental concerns in development planning. The section recommends that Pakistan's development policies move beyond simply identifying climate change considerations; they should also define specific actions to reduce climate change-related vulnerabilities. It also calls for mainstreaming renewable technologies and promoting green jobs for youth.

Section 8, *Governance, legal frameworks and institutional capacity*, uses six dimensions of governance – based on the World Bank's *Worldwide Governance Indicators* – to explore governance challenges in Pakistan. These dimensions are: voice and accountability, political stability and the absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law

and controlling corruption. Pakistan does not fare well on most of these dimensions compared to other countries in South Asia. The section explores key governance concerns, running the gamut from women's limited political representation to the marginalization of minorities (including through the misuse of the *Blasphemy Law*), human rights institutions' lack of autonomy, insufficient social dialogue between employers' and workers' organizations, and shrinking democratic space as more laws are enacted through presidential ordinances than by Parliament. It highlights human rights-related challenges that have emerged after the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (now known as the Newly Merged Districts) with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the COVID-19 pandemic. It also emphasizes the need for functional local government mechanisms to ensure that socio-economic indicators can be monitored and improved.

Section 9, *Prevention and humanitarian-development-peace collaboration*, establishes the link between poverty and crises – demonstrating how one can cause the other. To illustrate this argument, it points to examples of crisis-affected areas in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The section also highlights human rights concerns during humanitarian crises. It underscores the role of basic services – such as education, livelihoods and social protection floors – in stabilization processes. To address these challenges, it recommends mainstreaming human rights in all aspects of assistance, as well as securing the participation of affected populations, to strengthen prevention and humanitarian-development-peace collaboration. It calls for for additional donor support to enable the Government of Pakistan to include refugees and other vulnerable groups in development and humanitarian efforts. It also recommends making full use of the ongoing Afghan peace process to secure peace and development dividends – for Pakistan, Afghanistan and the region at large.



Methodology

This Common Country Analysis was developed in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Pakistan decided to reduce the scale and scope of this CCA, recognizing that UN agencies' time and resources must focus on responding to the pandemic.

The United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) in the region was consulted during the process of developing the CCA, which lasted approximately four months (October 2020–January 2021). Although stakeholder consultations could not be conducted given the process' rapid nature, the CCA draws on research, analysis and surveys conducted in 2020 that engaged a range of key stakeholders across Pakistan.

A CCA Task Force was set up (see [Annex I](#)), drawing together representatives of UN agencies to provide technical support and review the CCA process and its outputs. The Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRCO) in Pakistan provided overall coordination support. Informed by the guidelines of the *Cooperation Framework Companion Package* (July 2020), UNRCO drafted an outline of the CCA report, which the Task Force approved. The outline specified the CCA's focus areas and described what they should include.

On a voluntary basis, UN agencies were assigned responsibilities (see [Annex I](#)) as 'leads' (authors) or co-authors for each focus area. The South and South-West Asia Sub-regional Office of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in New Delhi participated in this process and coordinated inputs from its divisions.

The UNCT set up a *Data and Analysis Repository*, in which UN agencies placed relevant data to provide source material for the CCA and future analytical products. The data include a range of documents sourced from the Government, the UN and other international entities.

Each draft section of the CCA was prepared by its lead and co-author agencies, drawing on their rich technical expertise and available data.

The consolidated drafts were reviewed by UNRCO, a human rights specialist, the CCA Task Force, the UN Programme Management Team (PMT) and the Chairs of Provincial Programme Teams (PPTs). The UNCT subsequently reviewed and approved the CCA report before sharing it with UNDCO for its final approval. Comments by UNDCO were accommodated as far as possible to finalize the report in June 2021.



Section 1.

Country context

Population, demographics and development indicators: Labour, gender and youth

Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world. Its population of 220.9 million³ – considerably more than half of whom live in rural areas – is growing at an annual rate of 2.4%.⁴ This is twice the South Asian average (1.2%) and much higher than in other predominantly Muslim countries in the region, such as Bangladesh and Iran. If its high population growth rate continues unchanged, Pakistan's population will double in just 29 years, while other South Asian countries will see their populations double in 58 years, on average. Unless Pakistan urgently addresses its demographic transition by reducing the fertility rate and striking a balance between population growth and environmentally sustainable socio-economic development, its efforts to achieve the SDGs will be stymied by an unsustainably large population.

Pakistan is also one of the world's youngest countries: 61.4% of Pakistanis are of working age (between 15 and 64 years old), 29% are between 15 and 29⁵, and 51% are under 19.⁶ The country has a population density of 265 people per square kilometre. Men account for 51% of the population, women for 48.76% and transgender persons for 0.01%.⁷ In the absence of reliable data, estimates of the number of people living with disabilities vary widely – from 3.3 million to 27 million.⁸ Over 96% of Pakistan's population are Muslims⁹, most of whom are Sunni, while 10–15% are Shia.¹⁰ The remaining 4% include Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis and members of 'scheduled castes'.¹¹ Religious minorities experience economic and political marginalization (see section 4 for a discussion of the marginalization, underrepresentation and violence that they experience).

Pakistan's labour force is 65.5 million strong, according to the *Labour Force Survey 2017–18*.¹² It has the ninth largest labour force in the world

considering its population growth rate. While young people (aged 15–24) account for the greatest proportion of its work force, they also experience the highest unemployment rate (11.56%). Women's labour force participation has doubled from 13.3% in 1992 to 22.5% in 2018¹³ (or 22%, according to the World Bank's estimates for 2020¹⁴). Despite this, it remains far below men's labour force participation rate (77.5% in 2018¹⁵, or 80.3% according to 2020 estimates by the World Bank¹⁶) and is among the lowest female labour force participation rates in South Asia and the world.¹⁷ Most women workers are concentrated in the informal economy, particularly in agricultural, domestic and home-based work (see section 4 for more on gender inequality and section 8 for more on unequal land rights). It will be impossible to increase women's labour force participation without adequate investments in reducing their care burden, redistributing and rewarding care work, and advancing gender equality.

In 2018, Pakistan's *Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index* (IHDI) value was 0.384. This represents a 31% loss in its *Human Development Index* value – that is, nearly one-third of its achievements on human development are lost due to inequality. Pakistan also ranks of 154th of 189 countries on the *Gender Inequality Index* (GII) and 151st of 153 countries on the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Index 2020*.¹⁸

Regional and geographic (rural-urban) disparities also persist. While 54.6% of Pakistanis in rural areas are multidimensionally poor, this is true for just 9.4% of urban residents. Multidimensional poverty is highest in the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (73%) and Balochistan (71%), far above the national average of 38.8%.¹⁹ Intra-provincial disparities are also pronounced. For instance, due to years of neglect in public policy, South Punjab is overrepresented among districts with the highest rates of multidimensional poverty in Pakistan.²⁰ This is despite the fact that the province of Punjab has the lowest proportion of multidimensionally poor people overall, and the highest pace of decreasing poverty in the country. South Punjab faces administrative and governance-related challenges that have aggravated the social, economic and political grievances of its large population, who account for 32% of the provincial



population. Such trends are a grave concern for the Federal Government, provincial governments and development actors – especially considering Pakistan’s commitment to ‘leave no one behind’. Some forward-looking initiatives indicate a positive trajectory, such as adopting a universal approach to social protection, particularly universal health coverage, using data analytics for social protection through *Ehsaas* emergency cash transfers, and promoting IT-based social development systems.

Pakistan and the 2030 Agenda

Pakistan embraced the 2030 Agenda in 2016 by adopting the SDGs as part of its own national development framework, *Vision 2025*. This vision articulates the overarching policy framework of national development priorities.²¹ Since then, there has been considerable progress on mainstreaming the SDGs in national policies and strategies, including the *Five-Year Plan*, provincial growth strategies and Pakistan’s long-term development perspective. Learning from the experience of the Millennium Development Goals, National and Provincial Assemblies established SDG Task Forces to oversee progress on the SDGs. The Federal and Provincial Governments’ *Public Sector Development Programme* are central to financing the SDGs, although there is a limited focus on goals related to governance and the environment.

Looking forward, to embed the leaving no one behind framework as a core component of the 2030 Agenda, it is imperative that Pakistan focuses on improving situations for the most vulnerable segments of the population. As section 8 argues, this means adopting integrated, gender-responsive and cross-sectoral planning processes for *specific* people facing *specific* problems in *specific* places.

According to the UNDP, the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Pakistan are: women, adolescents and children; women exposed to gender-based violence; the working poor; food-insecure household headed by women; out-of-school children; transgender persons; persons with disabilities; the elderly; refugees, including Afghan refugees; stateless persons; migrants; internally displaced persons; people living in crisis-affected areas; residents of urban slums; women home-

based and domestic workers; agricultural workers; and religious minorities. Data disaggregation on these groups remains a significant challenge and will require considerable investments and coordination (see section 8).

Economy, including COVID-19’s impact and the pandemic response

The World Bank’s *World Development Indicators* (WDI) rank Pakistan as the 42nd largest economy globally in terms of nominal gross domestic product (GDP), placing it in the range of lower-middle income countries. Based on its nominal GDP per capita of US\$1,285, it ranked 154th in the world in 2019 and 132nd based on its purchasing power parity (PPP) of US\$4,898.²² Pakistan’s economy ranked 69th in terms of exports in 2018 and 49th in total imports. The country has experienced structural trade deficits, with greater imports than exports, and exports remaining sluggish on the back of a lack of competitiveness. The trade deficit widened to US\$32.6 billion in 2018²³ as imports grew much faster than exports.

Pakistan is currently facing an unprecedented economic shock due to the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with enormous pressure on its health sector. Nevertheless, it has performed well in terms of expanding its social safety net under the *Ehsaas* programme to support the most vulnerable. Before the pandemic, the economy was already experiencing a downturn in the wake of government stabilization policies.²⁴ These stabilization efforts and a recession appear to have positively affected the current account. Pakistan’s deficit contracted from 4.8% of GDP in FY19 to 1.1% in FY20, largely because import values declined by 19.3%.²⁵ Yet real GDP growth declined from 5.5% in FY18 to 1.9% in FY19 and -1.5% in FY20, according to the World Bank. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also projects that growth will decline by -1.5% in FY20 as the economy experiences demand and supply shocks. Public finances are under great pressure from the sharp increases in health and other expenditure to limit the pandemic’s effects – a strain amplified by a drastic decline in tax revenues. Exports are expected to fall, adding to a temporary loss of market access affecting the country’s balance of payments (BoP).



Pakistan's economy comprises three major sectors: agriculture, industry and services. Agriculture is the largest sector in terms of employment. In fact, most of the population depends on agriculture, either directly or indirectly. The undocumented or informal economy accounts for 36% of the economy as a whole. As expected, the industrial and service sectors have been hardest hit by COVID-19. Initial estimates suggest that, in the wake of the pandemic, roughly 1.4 million jobs will be lost, equivalent to 2.2% of the employed work force.²⁶

The pandemic has also heightened the deep-rooted issue of women's marginalization in decision-making fora. Women in Pakistan – who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and comprise 70% of the world's frontline health workers – represented only 5.5% of COVID-19 Committee members as of May 2020.²⁷ This makes it imperative to re-evaluate all aspects of the COVID-19 response to address gender inequality, as well as the marginalization of other vulnerable groups.

To mitigate COVID-19's impact, the Government of Pakistan announced a relief and stimulus package worth PKR 1.2 trillion. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has taken several measures, such as reducing the interest rate to 8%, refinancing schemes for medical centres and offering incentives for export-oriented industries. International lenders have also offered considerable support. For instance, the IMF granted Pakistan a one-year 'relief' period and US\$1.386 billion under the *Rapid Financing Instrument* to address the pandemic's economic impact. Aid packages from the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank, coupled with the G20's inclusion of Pakistan in their debt relief programme, aim to control projected losses. The Debt Service Suspension Initiative has been another source of international assistance, temporarily suspending Pakistan's debt servicing to major official bilateral creditors.²⁸ As the economy slowly reopens, it is expected that the pandemic's negative economic impact will be minimized.²⁹

Significant finances are needed to prepare Pakistan's economy to achieve the SDGs by 2030: an estimated US\$31 billion³⁰ per year between 2019 and 2030, at projected exchange rates.³¹ The IMF estimates the annual financing gap for the SDGs at PKR 620 billion (US\$3.72 billion) for 2020–

2030. The SDG financing gap Pakistan faces in achieving the 2030 Agenda is heightened by the drastic decline in Official Development Assistance (ODA), which fell by 42.3% in absolute terms from 2015 to 2019 – from US\$3.763 billion to US\$2.171 billion (at constant 2015 US\$).³² This is in addition to the fact that Pakistan does not generate enough financial resources to meet its national development (SDG) financing needs, given its a tax-to-GDP ratio of 8.6%, caused by a fragmented tax policy and weak tax administration. The country should be spending PKR 6.2 trillion (US\$37.246 billion) on achieving the SDGs over the next 10 years.³³ Some forward-looking actions to bridge the SDG financing gap are outlined in Pakistan's first *SDG Investor Map*, which is being developed to attract private sector investments. Major bilateral partnerships, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, also promise potentially broad-based, medium- to long-term multisectoral growth.

A holistic response is required to assist Pakistan's rapid post-COVID recovery, resilience and economic stabilization. A recovery strategy should centre on these major areas:

- public health security, economic security through growth, productivity and livelihoods; and
- leaving no one behind through digital solutions (for instance in health, education, urban and rural development through e-infrastructure and e-service delivery).

To enhance Pakistan's social and economic recovery, a five-pronged approach needs to be adopted to:

1. protect the health system and reverse disruptions in health service provision caused by COVID-19;
2. strengthen the social protection system to cope with adversity, including by improving governance and efficiency;
3. protect jobs and support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the most vulnerable productive actors through economic recovery programmes;
4. evoke a necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macroeconomic



policies work for the most vulnerable, while strengthening multilateral and regional responses; and

5. promote social cohesion and invest in community-led resilience and response systems.

Political economy

Pakistan is a confederation of four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan³⁴), a federal capital (Islamabad Capital Territory) and two federally administered regions (Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir). Punjab is Pakistan's most populous province, accounting for 51% of the national population. It is also the second-largest in land area, covering 23% of Pakistan's territory. It dominates in terms of its contributions to the national economy.

In 2010, the 18th Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution devolved considerable administrative and budgetary authority to provincial governments. This includes responsibility for key social sectors: health, education, climate change, human rights, population and social welfare, food and agriculture, water supplies and sanitation, and labour administration and governance. Yet disparities abound in provincial performance on these sectors. For instance, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan are lagging behind in terms of legislating on labour issues and administering labour laws.

The Federal Government remains responsible for coordination and international commitments. It is also exclusively responsible for finance, defence, natural resources and foreign affairs. Pakistan's local government system is weak, as administrative and financial powers remain in the hands of provincial governments. Many provinces have yet to hold local government elections and devolve power to these bodies.

Several political parties dominate the political arena at the national level, based on geographic, ethnic and religious factors. The military continues to play a central role, having been in power several times in Pakistan's history due to the perceived corruption of civilian governments, geopolitical tensions and regional crises. Prolonged security crises persist in some parts of the country, most

notably in the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, formerly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Although the situation is improving, decades of conflict in neighbouring Afghanistan, coupled with poor domestic governance and economic instability, have compounded humanitarian needs in the region. Since 2008, military operations to stem the tide of militancy and ensuing instability prompted significant population displacements from the Newly Merged Districts, aggravating challenges for vulnerable communities. According to government estimates, more than 74,000 people (civilians and law enforcement personnel) were killed and economic losses of US\$128 billion were incurred between 2004 and 2018.³⁵

Pakistan's political and economic situation urgently requires enhanced institutional capacity, peace, political stability and better economic management. These can be prioritized and grounded in emerging programming opportunities in key thematic areas:

- youth and women's empowerment, in terms of engagement, policy inclusion, business leadership and digital futures;
- green economic growth, focusing on non-traditional areas such as digital transformation, eco-tourism, the blue economy, urban development and regional connectivity;
- mitigating regional disparities and inequalities through provincial interventions, paired with regional connectivity programming; and
- private sector engagement to develop partnerships and increase SDG-related investments.

Environment and climate change

Climate change poses immense risks for Pakistan, especially as its economy depends heavily on agriculture. Smallholder farmers are especially vulnerable. Low agricultural productivity, rising water scarcity, stagnant economic growth and a rapidly growing population have worsened poverty and hunger, while undermining the coping capacities of the people most at risk from climate



change. High levels of food insecurity remain a major concern. According to the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*, the prevalence of undernourishment in Pakistan is 12.3%, with 26 million people either undernourished or food-insecure. The water sector is among the most sensitive to the impacts of climate change considering the Indus River Basin irrigation system's dependence on river inflows and precipitation. Moreover, according to the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, climate change will affect Pakistan's energy sector through extreme weather, negatively impacting energy sources and distribution infrastructure.

Germanwatch's *Global Climate Risk Index 2020* ranks Pakistan as the fifth most vulnerable country to environmental risks.³⁶ These risks have been laid bare by recent natural disasters, most notably earthquakes (in 2005, 2008, 2013 and 2015), drought (2018–2019) and floods (2007, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2020), including glacial lake outburst floods. Environmental risks are inextricably linked to climate change and Pakistan's location in one of the world's most active seismic zones. They are also exacerbated by human practices, such as deforestation and unsustainable patterns of consumption, urbanization and population growth.

To mitigate environmental risks, Pakistan needs to improve early warning systems, hazard monitoring and risk communication. Although significant strides have been made following major disasters – including the introduction of *Disease Early Warning Systems*, the *Integrated Flood Analysis System* and a *Specialized Medium Range Weather Forecasting Centre* – more needs to be done to strengthen hazard monitoring and data collection. Monitoring, forecasting and early warning systems need to be aligned with disaster risk reduction mechanisms for community preparedness and response. Pakistan's dependence on natural resources makes it imperative to treat environmental management as a central part of development, with an integrated approach to climate change and environmental factors in decision-making.

As the global host of World Environment Day 2021, which will mark the launch of the *UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration*, Pakistan should take this opportunity to address environmental challenges,

ecosystems, and sustainable consumption and production.

Section 2. Progress on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

Pakistan has achieved promising progress on several SDG targets. Positive trends on ‘Climate Action’ (SDG 13) and ‘No Poverty’ (SDG 1) can be built upon to accelerate the 2030 Agenda’s implementation. Improvements are also underway on ‘Decent Work and Economic Growth’ (SDG 8) and ‘Responsible Consumption and Production’ (SDG 12).

However, significant challenges persist on most SDGs. These include ‘Zero Hunger’ (SDG 2), ‘Good Health and Well-being’ (SDG 3), ‘Quality Education’

(SDG 4), ‘Gender Equality’ (SDG 5), ‘Clean Water and Sanitation’ (SDG 6), ‘Affordable and Clean Energy’ (SDG 7), ‘Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure’ (SDG 9), ‘Reduced Inequalities’ (SDG 10), ‘Sustainable Cities and Communities’ (SDG 11), ‘Life on Land’ (SDG 15), ‘Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions’ (SDG 16) and ‘Partnerships for the Goals’ (SDG 17).

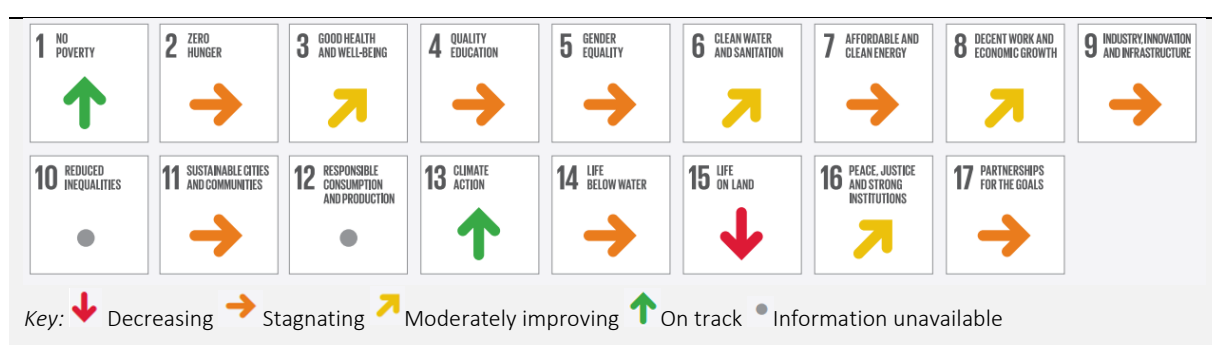
Despite being on track on some indicators, based on its current trajectory – and particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic – Pakistan is highly unlikely to achieve all 17 goals by 2030.

A comprehensive assessment of progress on the SDGs is restricted by time lags for certain indicators. Only 55% of SDG targets have sufficient data available (see [Annex III](#)).³⁷ [Annex II](#) and [Annex IV](#) present a comprehensive assessment of Pakistan’s performance on each goal.

Figure 1. Current assessment³⁸



Figure 2: SDG trends³⁹





People (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

Despite modest improvements on ‘No Poverty’ (SDG 1), Pakistan’s progress has been inadequate on ‘Zero Hunger’ (SDG 2), ‘Good Health and Well-being’ (SDG 3), ‘Quality Education’ (SDG 4), and ‘Gender Equality’ (SDG 5), with significant regional disparities.

Pakistan is making good progress on some social targets, most notably reducing extreme income poverty (SDG target 1.1), lowering child and maternal mortality rates (3.1 and 3.2), expanding vaccination coverage, increasing the prevalence of skilled birth attendance and antenatal care (3.2), boosting gross enrolment rates for pre-primary education (*katchi*) (4.2) and increasing the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women (5.5). Progress on curbing poverty can be attributed to the implementation of a range of social protection initiatives. These include minimum ‘social protection floor’ (safety net) programmes to protect people in vulnerable situations – the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, youth and children – most prominently through the *Ehsaas* (‘Compassion’) programme. Health insurance has increased thanks to *Sehat Insaaf* and *Khidmat* Cards, while the *Waseela-e-Taleem* programme has expanded primary education.

Recent years have also witnessed legislative milestones, such as the *Domestic Violence Protection and Prevention Act* of 2013 and the *Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act* of 2010. The *Employment of Children Act* of 1991 was recently amended to include ‘child domestic labour’ as a prohibited occupation at the federal level. These measures bode well for women, girls and boys. Other major developments include Pakistan’s commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25) in 2019, the Council of Common Interests’ Recommendation in 2018, and the establishment of task forces for balanced population growth. New provincial labour-related policies include Sindh’s and Punjab’s *Occupational Safety and Health Acts* of 2018 and 2019, respectively, the *Punjab Domestic Workers Act* of 2019, the *Sindh Home-based Workers Act* of 2018 and the *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines Safety, Inspection and Regulation Act* of 2019.

Yet at the current rate of progress, Pakistan is likely to miss all measurable targets related to other forms of poverty, hunger, health, education and gender equality. For instance, with the current pace of decline in the maternal mortality ratio, Pakistan will not achieve the SDG commitment to ensure that no more 70 women die per 100,000 live births by 2030. Women and girls face serious barriers to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Among children younger than 5 years old, malnutrition – both stunting and wasting – remain prevalent, especially in South Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh and the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pakistan is one of just two countries in the world where wild poliovirus remains endemic. Declining food production has contributed to high food prices, coupled with uneven levels of access to, and consumption of, food. All this feeds into alarming rates of food insecurity. According to the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*, the prevalence of undernourishment is 12.3%, with an estimated 26 million people in Pakistan either undernourished or food-insecure. Positive trends are slowly emerging. Access to food is increasingly treated as a human rights issue in the Government’s narrative, giving impetus to unified efforts by the state, the UN and others to achieve ‘Zero Hunger’ and food security.

Pakistan has the second highest number of out-of-school children in the world (22.8 million), with more girls out of school (53%) than boys (47%). Its federal and provincial governments have yet to devise a feasible solution to enrol all out-of-school children in the education system. Poor quality education is another major challenge; simply put, not all those who attend school are truly learning.⁴⁰ Discriminatory laws and social norms are pervasive, as are harmful practices and other forms of violence against women, girls and boys.

People living in poverty face barriers to accessing essential services (such as health care), securing decent work, exercising labour rights and participating fully in society. This highlights how trends on SDGs 1, 3, 8 and 11 are intertwined. To address these trends, substantial advances are required. Investments in adequate data – such as specifically assessing child poverty – would contribute to progress, as would stronger governance mechanisms on social protection.



Prosperity (Goals 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11)

Pakistan's progress is slow on 'Affordable and Clean Energy' (SDG 7), 'Decent Work and Economic Growth' (SDG 8), 'Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure' (SDG 9), 'Reduced Inequalities' (SDG 10) and 'Sustainable Cities and Communities' (SDG 11).

However, some positive developments are afoot. The unemployment rate is decreasing. The Government's *Kamyab Jawan* ('Successful Youth') and *Hunermad Jawan* ('Skills for All') programmes are helping young people to develop important skills. More people are using electricity than ever before, thanks to the operationalization of the Jhimpir Wind Power Plant and Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park. Mobile phone coverage and mobile broadband internet coverage are expanding rapidly through third generation (3G) or higher quality networks. With the expansion of information and communications technology (ICT), branchless banking is facilitating access to financial services.

If achieving economic growth requires more consumption of resources and energy, this implies a trade-off between SDG 8, on the one hand, and SDGs 7 and 12, on the other. Inclusive economic growth requires effective policy measures to ensure sustainable consumption and production, advance environmental sustainability, eradicate forced and child labour, and improve compliance with international labour standards. Urbanization (SDG 11) puts growing pressure on resource and material consumption (SDGs 7 and 12) while contributing to climate change (SDG 13). There are also essential interlinkages between urbanization, ecosystems and biodiversity (SDGs 14 and 15), to the detriment of the latter.

Planet (Goals 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15)

Compared with other goals, Pakistan performs relatively better on 'Climate Action' (SDG 13), followed somewhat by 'Life Below Water' (SDG 14) and 'Life on Land' (SDG 15). Challenges remain for 'Responsible Consumption and Production' (SDG 12) and major challenges persist for other goals, such as 'Clean Water and Sanitation' (SDG 6).

As its energy-related emissions are below 2 tonnes per capita, Pakistan has technically achieved its

'Climate Action' goal. Nevertheless, as a result of high levels of population growth and urbanization, the country's natural ecosystems are being degraded, and water and air quality are deteriorating at pace. A loss of biodiversity points to overstretched ecosystems, posing immense challenges to environmental and socio-economic sustainability. The government-led *Clean and Green Pakistan* campaign is a positive move, as is the introduction of the *National Water Policy* and the *Punjab Water Act* of 2019. If implemented effectively, these may lessen the effects of climate change and accelerate progress on clean water and sanitation for all. Efforts to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources (target 12.2) urgently need to be accelerated, while the management of chemical waste (12.4) requires a turnaround. There is also an immediate need to reverse ongoing threats to marine and coastal resources (SDG 14) from overfishing, pollution and habitat degradation, as well as the negative impacts on 'Life on Land' (SDG 15) caused by deforestation, pollution and urbanization.

Urbanization (SDG 11) in Pakistan clearly exacerbates pollution from industry and agriculture, contributing to climate change (SDG 13) and the poor quality and availability of water (SDG 6). Rising temperatures, fluctuating rates of precipitation and prolonged drought compromise freshwater supplies, increasing the risk of disease (SDG 3). Disasters can destroy water supplies or leave behind contaminated water, putting the lives of millions at risk (SDGs 1, 3 and 10).

Peace (Goal 16)

The call to 'leave no one behind' cuts across every aspect of the 2030 Agenda, placing human rights firmly at the heart of the SDGs. This human-rights based approach is one reason why the 2030 Agenda and its goals are transformative – over 90% of their targets concern human rights. Pakistan has yet to ensure that its national human rights institutions (NHRIs) comply with international standards. The National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR) is working towards compliance with international standards, leveraging the interface between the UN and the Global Alliance of NHRIs.

Pakistan's progress on human rights and on 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions' (SDG 16) remains



slow. It ranked 124th of 180 countries on Transparency International's *Corruption Perception Index* (CPI) in 2020,⁴¹ and 145th of 180 countries on the *World Press Freedom Index 2020*.⁴² Despite progress on implementing the *Right of Access to Information Bill* of 2017, increasing the accountability of public bodies remains a challenge.

Positive trends include extensive reforms by the Government, such as the *Anti-Money Laundering (Amendment) Bill* of 2019 to strengthen anti-money laundering frameworks. The *Rule of Law Roadmap 2018–22*, prepared by the Government of Balochistan with UN support, is another promising development. So too is the activation of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child in February 2020. Progress is underway on the registration of Afghan refugees, civil registration and vital statistics, and birth registration for children under the age of five. Nevertheless, the *Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–18* (PDHS) reports that 58% of children are not registered. While violence against women and children – both girls and boys – remains extremely widespread, the implementation of the *Acid Crime (Amended) Law*, and efforts to monitor acid attacks, have halved the incidence of acid crimes in Pakistan.

To sustain and build on positive trends, substantial efforts are needed to end violence (especially gender-based violence), promote the rule of law, ensure the implementation of legislation, expand access to justice, advance gender justice and strengthen institutions at all levels. It is vital to strengthen freedom of association and collective bargaining, reform labour laws and enhance compliance with these laws. Strong legislative safeguards are also needed for journalists' safety, to gather and use gender-disaggregated data – for evidence-based planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation – and to design laws and frameworks that foster a more open, just society.

Partnership (Goal 17)

Pakistan is unlikely to achieve any of SDG 17's targets by 2030 without sustained efforts, despite recent progress. After 19 years, Pakistan successfully conducted its sixth Population Census in 2017. More citizens than ever before are able to access the internet, although the COVID-19

pandemic reveals a huge digital divide, especially in Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan.

Half of the domestic budget is funded by revenue from domestic sources – well below the world average of 65%. The inflow of foreign direct investment has been falling and Official Development Assistance has dramatically declined. Coordinating efforts for greater efficiency – between and within countries – while managing budget limitations poses challenges. Cross-country analysis demonstrates that government spending in Pakistan is relatively low and there is a need to create additional fiscal space, largely by increasing tax collection. Another challenge is the lack of adequate data – ranging from incomplete sets of indicators to insufficient coverage and poor data quality.

Nevertheless, there are some grounds for cautious optimism. Pakistan has recently set up mechanisms to enhance policy coherence on sustainable development, country-owned federal and provincial frameworks and planning tools for development. It is implementing cross-sectoral partnerships at the federal and provincial levels. All of its provinces and federally administered areas have created SDG Support Units within their Planning & Development Departments. A Parliamentary Task Force in the National Assembly Secretariat was created to steer Pakistan's SDG agenda and help policy makers align Annual Development Plans with SDGs targets. The European Union (EU) has granted duty-free access to 96% of Pakistani exports to the EU through its Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+). Pakistan's *Vision 2025* commits to public-private approaches for development interventions. The ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative also promises to deliver broad-based, multisectoral growth over the medium- to long-term. The *Doing Business Reform Plan* is being implemented to support businesses and startups, with a view to enhancing the investment climate. Strengthened partnerships with employers' organizations and trade unions are key to supporting and sustaining growth.

Moving forward, urgent action is needed to boost tax revenues, debt sustainability, statistical capacity, technology transfer, international cooperation, trade conditions, partnerships with



employers' organizations and trade unions, and policy coherence on sustainable development. All of this will be vital to strengthen the means by which Pakistan can achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Conclusion

Pakistan may achieve some SDG targets by 2030. Yet the challenges it faces on the social, economic and environmental fronts – especially given the COVID-19 pandemic – are likely to limit progress on the SDGs overall.

To translate these findings into action, there is a need to strengthen **Pakistan's governance and institutional mechanisms**, as an essential building block for effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda. Efforts are equally essential to **improve data availability**, given the importance of data for well-designed policies, SDG monitoring and accountability. There is also a need for qualitative data: according to people who are farthest behind, what do they want and need?

The complex issues addressed by the SDGs will require **integrated innovative responses** that are embedded in **multisectoral partnerships** – between civil society, academia, the private sector, trade unions and all levels of government. These responses must be built upon a **shared vision and shared goals** that place people and the planet at their core. Where relevant, the Government should clearly stipulate which priority areas require **support from the international community** – giving detailed directions on the roles that **humanitarian and development partners** can play to support Pakistan's implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In essence, Pakistan needs a much faster and more pragmatic response to advance the social and economic transformation required to achieve the SDGs, and ensure that policy choices leave no one behind.



Section 3.

The SDG financing landscape

Mapping SDG financing

Since Pakistan adopted the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals as its own national framework for development in 2016, SDG financing has been a national priority. Public resources dominate the country's SDG financing landscape. Considering the development and economic challenges that Pakistan is facing, financing the SDGs requires a holistic approach with contributions from a range of stakeholders: the public sector, Official Development Assistance and, especially, the private sector to fill existing gaps.

With a tax-to-GDP ratio of 8.6%, Pakistan does not generate enough financial resources to meet national development (SDG) financing needs. Reasons for this low tax-to-GDP ratio include Pakistan's fragmented tax policy and weak tax administration. Growing debt repayment pressures further constrain resource availability for development expenditures.⁴³ As a result, Pakistan spends only 2.3% of its GDP on education and 1.1% on health.⁴⁴

Some improvements in fiscal management are afoot. The Government of Pakistan substantially reduced its fiscal deficit to 4.0% of GDP in July–March FY20, down from 5.1% in the previous fiscal year. Tax collection by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) – the main source of the Government's revenue – grew by 10.8% to PKR 3,300.6 billion in July–April FY20, up from PKR 2,980.0 billion in the same period in 2019.⁴⁵ Despite this, the Government's net tax revenues are not enough to enlarge development financing. Thus, the SDG financing gap persists.

National SDG financing needs

To achieve the SDGs, Pakistan's financing needs are significant. As noted above, an estimated US\$31 billion⁴⁶ per year are needed to achieve key SDGs in

Pakistan by 2030, at the projected exchange rate.⁴⁷ The *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2019* estimates that Pakistan will need to increase financing by nearly 17% of GDP per year to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Around half of these investments will need to be in social protection, health, education and rural development. The other half is required for clean energy and climate-resilient infrastructure. The IMF provides different estimates, valuing the annual SDG financing gap at PKR 620 billion (US\$3.72 billion) for 2020–2030. This is almost 100% of current federal development spending.⁴⁸

To reach this level, Pakistan requires an investment rate in the range of 22–25% of GDP, primarily financed through domestic savings (over twice the current rate of 10–12%⁴⁹) and a tax-to-GDP ratio of 16–18%, more than twice the current rate.⁵⁰ In addition, it needs a merchandized exports-to-GDP ratio of 16–19%, far higher than its present ratio of 6.9%⁵¹, paired with single-digit inflation, which stood at 8.91% in FY20.⁵² To achieve these aims, public financial management systems need to be strengthened significantly.

Challenges posed by COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and its recovery process pose even great challenges to SDG financing goals. The UN's *COVID-19 Socio-Economic Framework for Pakistan* estimates that achieving the framework's five pillars – health, social protection, jobs, macroeconomic response and community resilience – will require US\$1.26 billion⁵³, roughly 0.5% of GDP in FY20.⁵⁴ In light of the pandemic, the Government has estimated that the fiscal deficit will widen to 9.4% of GDP and the public debt will rise to 88% of GDP in the fiscal year ending in June 2020. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics' *Special Survey for Evaluating COVID-19's Socio-Economic Impact on the Well-being of People*, published in December 2020⁵⁵, indicates that 20.6 million workers lost their jobs and 6.7 million lost income during the COVID-related lockdown (March–July 2020). While around 18 million workers returned to work after July 2020, more than 2 million remained out of work in December.

SDG financing in Pakistan

Existing financing sources for the SDGs in Pakistan include public finance, Official Development Assistance and private finance, as discussed below.

Public finance

The Government of Pakistan finances the SDGs through its *Public Sector Development Programme* (PSDP). According to the latest estimates available, 89% of funds allocated to the PSDP between 2013 and 2017 have contributed directly to the SDGs.⁵⁶ These funds increased gradually during this period, by approximately 1.6%. Most of this funding (42.4%) was spent on clean and affordable energy (SDG 7), followed by 22.5% on industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9) (see Figure 1 in [Annex IV](#)). This is in not in line with the prioritization of SDGs in Pakistan's *National SDG Framework*. Between 2013 and 2017, the *Public Sector Development Programme* prioritized economic goals (energy and infrastructure) more than social goals (health and education). The lowest priority was accorded to SDGs related to governance and the environment.

For 2020–21, the Federal Government has allocated PKR 650 billion (US\$3.905 billion) to the *Public Sector Development Programme* to support economic development and, indirectly, to help achieve the SDGs. This represents 4.8% of GDP in 2019–2020.⁵⁷ Beyond the programme, PKR 70 billion has been allocated for various projects⁵⁸ that contribute towards the SDGs' social targets. Some 71.4% of this amount is earmarked for 'security enhancements' and the *Grant Relief and Rehabilitation of Internally Displaced Persons*.⁵⁹

Provincial governments in Pakistan finance ongoing development projects through *Annual Development Plans*. These follow trends similar to those at the federal level. Figure 2 in [Annex IV](#) presents a breakdown of cumulative development expenditures of around PKR 1.65 trillion (US\$10 billion) by Pakistan's federal and provincial governments in FY20–21. Combined, they have spent most on infrastructure development (29.17%).

Official Development Assistance

Official Development Assistance has decreased over time. As a percentage of gross national income (GNI), it ranged between 3% and 10% from 1960 to 1980. By 2018, it had fallen to 0.41%.⁶⁰ In absolute terms, from 2015 to 2018, ODA decreased by 65.3% – from US\$3.763 billion to US\$1.305 billion (at constant 2015 US\$).⁶¹

According to the most recent estimates available, Pakistan spent most of the Official Development Assistance it received in 2017 on 'other' social infrastructure services (44.3%), followed by education (13.4%), economic infrastructure services (13.2%), energy (8.9%), humanitarian aid (6.3%) and the rest (13.9%) on other areas, such as food, clean air, water supplies, sanitation, agriculture and trade.⁶² All of these areas contribute to the 2030 Agenda, serving as catalysts for progress on the SDGs by filling gaps in public spending.

Nevertheless, for long-term fiscal sustainability, Pakistan needs to depend more on public finance than on Official Development Assistance. It is also worth noting that most of the budget for key sectors, like education, is spent on recurring costs (salaries) rather than on development.

Private finance

In 2017, total philanthropic contributions by listed and unlisted private limited companies were estimated at PKR 25.3 billion (US\$0.15 billion). This was more than Official Development Assistance in 2017 and 2018 combined.⁶³ Most of these funds were spent on education (41%), health (28%) and clean water and sanitation (8%).⁶⁴

Private finance can fill gaps in public sector financing by investing in the provision of public goods, services and infrastructure. Data required to quantify non-governmental financing sources for achieving the SDGs are not well-captured. Therefore, estimates must be used to gauge the potential of private finance. For instance, approximately 50% of Pakistan's electricity generation capacity comes from the private sector.⁶⁵ Its investments have helped the country avoid several power crises. This suggests that quasi-market solutions like public-private



partnerships can play a significant role in attracting private finance for funding the SDGs. Private Pakistani enterprises are already major players in key social sectors, such as education and health care, where significant potential exists for public-private partnerships.

Other private investment avenues, such as venture capital and social entrepreneurship, are emerging in Pakistan. However, their size and impact remains limited. These include ventures like *Akhuwat*, which launched its Islamic Microfinance initiative in 2001 to provide interest-free loans to low-income households. It has helped more than 4 million families to improve their livelihoods by disbursing PKR 100 billion (US\$600.74 million) nationwide.⁶⁶ Another example is how the Government of Pakistan raised PKR 200 billion (US\$1.425 billion) for Power Energy Sukuk II in April 2020 through the local stock market. This was oversubscribed by 70%, which hints at Islamic finance's potential to help bridge the SDG financing gap.

Bridging the SDG financing gap: Moving forward

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, uncertainty abounds about how the SDG financing landscape will evolve in the post-pandemic world. Amid shrinking public investment, the Government should enhance the efficiency of public spending and reorient expenditure towards the social sector. One policy option is to introduce a public budget tagging system. This would track government budgets in terms of spending allocated and disbursed to prioritized SDGs. The Government will also need adaptive policies to tailor its financing strategies towards accelerating progress on the SDGs.


A facilitating environment and appropriate policies are needed to make the private sector understand that sustainability is key to their long-term financial success. For example, when public-private partnerships fill gaps in the provision of public services, this creates a 'win-win' situation for everyone: the private sector earns profits, the Government's burden is reduced and citizens enjoy greater access to services. This can be achieved by balancing investments between social and economic infrastructure. In addition, innovative

mechanisms can be explored, including 'debt swap', Islamic finance (green *Sukuk* bonds, among others), social impact funds (especially for education and health) and harnessing digital technologies to create a transparent financial system and cost-efficient programmes for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Compared to other debt reduction modalities, swaps tend to have more direct benefits for sustainable development.⁶⁷

There are examples of innovative mechanisms working in practice. In 2021, Pakistan's Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) successfully raised US\$500 million from international markets when it first issued green bonds.⁶⁸ The Government is developing and brokering the *Nature Restoration Performance Bond* instrument in Pakistan. As a high-risk country for disasters, Pakistan is collaborating with Global Finance Hub for inclusion in the Insurance Risk Financing Facility (IRRF). This aims to strengthen financial resilience and response, in order to recover from natural disaster-related shocks. The Government is also developing Pakistan's first *SDG Investor Map* to attract private sector investment.

The Government could engage the Pakistani diaspora for SDG financing through diaspora bonds. Pakistan is among the top 10 recipient countries of personal remittances, which accounted for the largest share of external financial flows to Pakistan in 2020. Regulatory and investment climate reforms would also help Pakistan revitalize the economy and finance the SDGs post-COVID-19.

International development partners, especially the United Nations, can be catalysts for bridging the SDG financing gap. They can be leveraged by governments to develop a shared understanding of global minimum standards for sustainable investment products, while avoiding conflicting standards. They can also provide a platform for multiple stakeholders to hold informal, inclusive dialogue on policy options for financing SDG investments, while maintaining sustainable debt. Simultaneously, development partners can contribute to socio-economic analyses, facilitate intergovernmental negotiation on agreed recommendations and support national authorities to identify avenues for the SDGs' effective implementation.



Section 4.

Leaving no one behind, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment

'Leaving no one behind' is the central pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It means achieving the SDGs for everyone, everywhere. Inclusiveness and shared prosperity are the core strategy for doing so. Reaching the **farthest behind first** is the SDGs' maxim – the poorest, the most vulnerable and those who are often hardest to reach. A key lesson learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is the need to abandon averages when measuring progress.⁶⁹ As such, this Common Country Analysis identifies specific groups living in disadvantaged and vulnerable situations in order to examine the key drivers of vulnerability in Pakistan.

In terms of the five dimensions of leaving no one behind identified by UNDP, the following groups are considered the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in Pakistan:

- women, adolescents and children;
- women exposed to gender-based violence;
- the working poor;
- food-insecure households headed by women;
- out-of-school children;
- transgender persons;
- persons with disabilities;
- the elderly;
- refugees, including Afghan refugees;
- stateless persons;
- migrants;

- internally displaced persons;
- people living in crisis-affected areas;
- residents of urban slums;
- women home-based and domestic workers;
- agricultural workers; and
- religious minorities.

Levels, trends and determinants of vulnerabilities in Pakistan

Economic drivers of vulnerability

Pakistan has made considerable strides on economic development, considering that it is the world's fifth most populous country and 38% of the population is under the age of 15. Since 2008, the World Bank has classified it as a lower-middle-income country.⁷⁰

However, the gap between rich and poor is growing. Income inequality has risen dramatically and social development is not at pace with economic development. Between 2004 and 2015, poverty in Pakistan – based on the headcount ratio of the *Multidimensional Poverty Index* (MPI) – fell by 16 percentage points. There are stark sub-national and urban-rural disparities in poverty nationwide, as discussed above.⁷¹ Poverty and inequitable income distribution are associated with inequities in reproductive choices as well. The total fertility rate among Pakistan's poorest quintile is 4.9, compared to 2.8 among the richest quintile.⁷²

COVID-19 has influenced all dimensions of multidimensional poverty, intensifying its incidence and intensity, especially for the most vulnerable – especially the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, children, youth, non-nationals and the working poor (informal economy workers). As a result of the pandemic, 56.6% of Pakistan's population is susceptible to becoming multidimensionally vulnerable. An estimated 126 million people are likely to be pushed into multidimensional poverty.⁷³ The multidimensional aspects of child poverty and economic distress are likely to force more children into child labour and child marriage. A lack of sufficient income and assets also reduces people's ability to cope with shocks, reducing their resilience. Moreover,



women's disproportionate care responsibilities make them 'time poor'. As this further hampers their access to opportunities for income generation, it compounds women's vulnerability.

Unemployment and a lack of decent work are major drivers of economic vulnerability. There is a particular need to advance women's empowerment through decent employment, entrepreneurship and access to economic assets. This would harness the benefits of Pakistan's demographic dividend and the potential for increasing women's participation in the labour market as fertility rates fall. More women in the labour force will boost growth, but it will also require greater labour absorption capacities, underpinned by substantial economic growth.

A high dependency ratio in Pakistan, coupled with very high unemployment rates, also causes vulnerability. At the household level, a high dependency ratio exists in large families that depend on the income of a single earner. This implies low per capita income within the household. It also means that a shock – such as job loss, illness, or injury of the breadwinner – can drive an entire family into hardship in one fell swoop, exacerbating their vulnerability. One estimate suggests that the pandemic could result in job losses for nearly 11.7 million people in Pakistan, including informal economy workers in the hospitality and tourism sectors. With livelihoods lost and limited or no options for replacing lost income, up to 10 million people in Pakistan may be pushed into extreme poverty (based on the US\$1.9/day poverty measure) due to the negative shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷⁴

Although the Government of Pakistan has prioritized youth empowerment in the policy arena, more efforts are needed to enhance young people's education and skills to enable their productive employment. An educated, skilled youth workforce would help Pakistan reap the demographic dividend, and compete and prosper in a highly competitive global economy.

Environmental hazards are further destabilizing Pakistan's economic potential, while affecting different segments of the population to different degrees. For instance, those engaged in climate-dependent livelihoods (agriculture, fishing and

herding, for instance), as well as in manual labour, are being made more vulnerable by environmental risks. These include climate change, global warming, and the degradation of ecosystems and natural resources.

Pakistan's huge informal economy is characterized by a high incidence of poverty and severe decent work deficits. The informal sector accounts for 71.7% of non-agricultural employment in the country.⁷⁵ Digitization has resulted in the expansion of the 'gig economy' based on online platforms, such as online taxi companies or crowd-work platforms with a large share of Pakistani online workers. Working conditions in the gig economy mirror those in the informal economy.⁷⁶ Without formalization, decent work and equality for all will remain elusive.

Despite some gains, the pace of progress on decent work is very slow. A large number of workers remain beyond the ambit of labour laws, social security and other benefits linked with decent work, forcing them to toil in poverty. Some 90% of the country's lowest-paid workers are women.⁷⁷ Controlling for other factors, men in Pakistan earn 71% more than women and contribute only 8.9% of unpaid care work.⁷⁸ Women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work nationwide. Chief among Pakistan's lowest-paid workers are women engaged in the informal economy, including women home-based workers (HBWs). Regardless of the rural and urban divide, women home-based workers are largely illiterate and lack financial independence. Pakistani women's limited mobility and limited access to economic services, social services and financial resources makes them exceptionally vulnerable. Women-led MSMEs would benefit from training and capacity building on modern ICT technologies, such as e-commerce and digital marketing platforms, to enhance women's labour force participation, close gender gaps and advance women's economic empowerment.⁷⁹

Women-headed households are especially disadvantaged in terms of assets due to discriminatory inheritance laws. A lack of access to productive assets – including livestock and agricultural land – impacts women's economic self-sufficiency and food security. The increasing trend of landownership concentration has resulted in a



large number of landless farmers and small-scale landholders living in poverty. It has also exposed landless farmers to severe exploitation through feudal tenancy arrangements.

As a result of the lack of comprehensive legislative or policy frameworks on labour protection, the minimum wage does not cover all workers in the country. Minimum wage levels vary between provinces and concerns exist that the minimum wage is not sufficient to provide workers and their families with a decent standard of living. Even when workers are entitled to the minimum wage, compliance with the established minimum wage is low. The same is true for other labour rights – even when laws exist, compliance is limited. Therefore, scores of workers are effectively without legal protection. ‘Third party contracts’ are another way of excluding workers from their rightful benefits. However, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has declared that workers with third party contracts are entitled to the same rights as regular workers.

According to analysis by the UN, spending on social protection by Pakistan’s federal and provincial governments amounted to 2.36% of GDP in 2016–17⁸⁰, considerably lower than in other states. Roughly 9.2% of the population is covered by at least one kind of social protection benefit, significantly lower than the global average of 46.9%. Pakistan’s existing social protection system does not sufficiently cover the so-called ‘missing-middle’. Informal and unorganized workers – including self-employed, home-based and domestic workers – are largely not covered by social security. Even those working in the formal economy are disadvantaged by the complex social assistance system in cases of job loss, given the lack of an unemployment insurance scheme.⁸¹ The absence of a universal social protection system poses challenges for the coverage of social protection programmes. Simulations suggest that introducing universal child benefits for all households with at least one child under the age of 18 would significantly reduce poverty and boost consumption in recipient households.⁸²

Socio-cultural and geographic drivers of vulnerability

Inequality and social exclusion magnify the difficulty of achieving the SDGs ‘for all’. For

instance, 30% of children between 5 and 16 years old are out of school in Pakistan, down very slightly from 33% in 2013–14.⁸³ There are more girls among their ranks (53%) than boys (47%). Significant sub-national variations exist in rates of out-of-school children. Access to quality education for all is an issue that intersects with social class, gender and ethnicity. Recommendations on reviewing public school curricula to eliminate prejudice against minorities have not yet been implemented. Overall, the curriculum is apparently biased in terms of religion and gender, as well as historically one-sided, which feeds into intolerance and prejudice.⁸⁴ Pakistan also lacks a systematic employment strategy or programme. Some 31% of young people – 7.5% of young men and boys, and 55% of young women and girls – are not in education, employment or training (NEET) according to the *Labour Force Survey 2017–18*.

Malnutrition remains rampant. Over 40% of Pakistan’s children under-five are stunted (12 million children), 17.7% suffer from wasting and 2.5 million are ‘severely wasted’.⁸⁵ Higher parity, illiterate parents, a lack of sanitation facilities, and poverty are significantly linked with the likelihood of stunting. There is also a gender bias in stunting. Analysis by UNICEF suggests that boys in Pakistan are more likely to be affected by all forms of malnutrition, with regional disparities.⁸⁶ As noted above, 12.3% of Pakistan’s population are undernourished, with an estimated 26 million people suffering from undernourishment or food insecurity, according to the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*. Other estimates put this number even higher. For instance, recent estimates by the World Food Programme suggest that as many 20%–30% of the population (40 to 62 million people) are affected by some form of food insecurity.⁸⁷

It is encouraging that Pakistan was among the first countries in the world to adopt the *Disease Control Priorities*’ (DCP3) recommendations to accelerate the SDGs’ universal health care (UHC) agenda. This overarching strategy to guide the transformation of the health system is a major development, critically linked with leaving no one behind.

Nevertheless, health-related challenges persist. Frequent outbreaks of polio, measles, diphtheria (VPDs), dengue and typhoid fever present among the greatest challenges to Pakistan’s public health



system, a situation further aggravated by COVID-19. Without increasing the health budget and social safety nets, out-of-pocket health expenditure will shoot up in the coming years, making the poor ever more vulnerable.

The coverage of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and family planning (FP) interventions remains extremely low. More efforts and investments are needed to achieve SDGs' related to these issues, as well as Pakistan's commitments to the International Conference on Population and Development.⁸⁸ Poorer, less educated women have far lower levels of knowledge on, or access to, family planning, and sexual and reproductive services. The most marked inequities are evident in the prevalence of childbearing and financial constraints to accessing services. Women from the poorest households and with no education are four times more likely to report a serious financial problem in accessing health care, compared to the wealthiest and most educated women in Pakistan. Despite some progress in increased access to antenatal care and skilled birth attendance, ending preventable maternal and newborn mortality clearly remains 'unfinished business'. Every day, 32 women die from pregnancy and childbirth-related complications in Pakistan.⁸⁹ There is a need to focus on family planning programmes that also target men, so as to avoid placing the burden for family planning on women alone.

Adolescent mothers have the highest neonatal mortality rates in the country. Adolescent girls also have the highest unmet demand for modern methods of contraception and the lowest levels of contraceptive use. Usage is higher among urban women, more educated women and women in wealthier households. However, there are marked disparities between regions. While provincial inequities are mixed, Balochistan has among the lowest coverage of sexual and reproductive health and family planning services overall. Only 25% of married women use effective modern contraception and fewer than 5% of young women have comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS.⁹⁰ Groups at high risk of contracting HIV face discrimination in access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.⁹¹ Pakistan also experiences high rates of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), particularly among

key populations, given pervasive inequities. These include discriminatory social norms, paired with limited access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and reproductive health commodities, such as condoms. All this has an adverse effect on the population's reproductive health.

Social-cultural barriers create bottlenecks that prevent young people from seeking support or services to meet their physical, mental, emotional and psychological needs. One in eight adolescent girls, and one in five adolescent boys, is underweight. About 56.6% of adolescent girls in Pakistan are anaemic. Adolescent girls and women of reproductive age are the leading targets of gender-based discrimination, entrenched in patriarchal norms.⁹² These norms are key drivers of Pakistan's high fertility rates, as well as of women's role as the main caregivers in families. Harmful practices like child marriage remain prevalent; 29% of women between 25 and 49 years old were married before the age of 18.⁹³ A significant percentage of child marriages in Pakistan lead to adolescent pregnancy. Moreover, a considerable differential in terms of education, wealth quintile and place of residence exists in child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.⁹⁴ If lifesaving maternal and child health care and contraceptive services are disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, this will contribute to an increase in maternal and newborn mortality, alongside a rise in the unmet need for contraception. In turn, these could provoke potential lifelong morbidities and disabilities like obstetric fistula, as well as increased gender-based violence.

The recommendations of Pakistan's Council of Common Interests (CCI) propose that federal and provincial governments pass the *Child Marriage Restraint Act* to prevent child marriage. Sindh passed its provincial *Child Marriage Restraint Act* in 2013, raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 for girls. However, the Act's implementation is weak, especially in cases involving Hindu Dalit minors. The absence of birth registration among the so-called 'scheduled caste' Hindu community is a significant hurdle to the Act's implementation.⁹⁵ Women from minority groups are doubly subject to discrimination – on the basis of their gender and



religion – and are particularly vulnerable to kidnapping and forced conversion.

In terms of gender equality-related indicators, Pakistan's *Human Development Index* value for 2019 is 0.557 – far lower than that of other South Asian countries (0.641). As discussed in section 1, Pakistan's Inequality-adjusted HDI for 2019 is 0.384, representing a loss of 31% in its *Human Development Index* value caused by inequality. Pakistan also ranks poorly on gender equality, ranking 151st of 153 countries on the *Global Gender Gap Index 2020*.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive across Pakistan. Some 34% of women and girls who are, or ever have been, married have experienced spousal physical, sexual or emotional violence.⁹⁶ Experiences of violence are more common among women who are employed but unpaid, uneducated and form part of the country's poorest households. Nevertheless, significant provincial variations exist. Pakistan also has a skewed sex ratio at birth (SRB) as a result of son preference and gender-biased sex selection.

Persons with disabilities, especially people with mental disabilities, are more vulnerable than other groups. Disability is also a barrier to accessing basic health care and employment in Pakistan. About one in five (19%) household members over 5 years old experience difficulties in one or more 'functional domains'.⁹⁷ Women and girls with disabilities face a double burden of discrimination due to their gender and their disability. They are particularly restricted from accessing services such as sexual and reproductive health care.⁹⁸

While Pakistan is one of the few countries in the world that has counted its transgender population in the Population Census of 2017, the number reported appears far too small – just 0.01% of the population. Other sources estimate that the transgender community is far larger. Transgender people, particularly transgender women, face a toxic mix of stigma, harassment, discrimination and exclusion from society. More often than not, the legal system does not effectively protect them from discrimination based on their gender identity. The Supreme Court granted transgender people the right to vote and attain a National Identity Card in

2011, but this has not yet translated into legal and policy remedies to guarantee their rights.

Urbanization and internal migration in Pakistan have transformed both its provinces and the country as a whole. Approximately 76 million people in Pakistan lived in urban areas in 2017.⁹⁹ Such a huge share of its population living in cities poses immense challenges for urban planning and management. Pakistan also has among the greatest concentrations of people living in urban poverty: about 40% of urban residents live in slums, with a dire impact on the social determinants of health and well-being.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, internally displaced persons and Afghan refugees are more vulnerable to external shocks than host communities due to their fragile legal status and exclusion from many social protection initiatives.

There has also been a high incidence of recent hate crimes against ethnic and religious minorities, particularly Hazaras, Christian Dalits, Hindu Dalits and Ahmadis, coupled with a lack of investigation and prosecution of these crimes. Reports of violence against members of Shia, Christian and Ahmadiyya communities, as well as against individuals accused of blasphemy, have substantially increased.¹⁰¹ Limited official data exist on the real number of blasphemy cases in Pakistan. However, legislation on blasphemy appears to bolster discriminatory attitudes against religious and ethnic minorities, offering a legal and institutional platform for non-state actors to discriminate against minorities.¹⁰² Legislative frameworks to protect minorities are not effectively implemented.

Institutional and political drivers of vulnerability

The most pressing institutional and political drivers of vulnerabilities in Pakistan are linked to the fact that many groups have inadequate access to basic quality education, health care and a decent standard of living. However, these factors do not fully explain how and why some groups appear to receive less policy support than others. Many vulnerable groups identified in this report, for instance, have especially poor access to basic public services. Three kinds of gaps are most evident: first, where relevant laws do not exist,



second, where the special conditions of a group are not adequately captured within existing laws, and third, where laws discriminate against specific groups such as persons with disabilities, women, children, the working poor and non-nationals. Moreover, while laws and policies exist on paper, they are often not fully enforced or implemented in practice. Gaps between policies and their implementation, and laws and their enforcement, reflects an absence of accountability mechanisms in state institutions. Invariably, this is to the detriment of socially and politically marginalized groups. In terms of transparency and accountability, civil society provides vital external oversight to monitor government institutions. However, the Government's increased regulation of civil society's activities and funding streams hampers their independence and ability to advocate for human rights.

Data gaps

Another manifestation of institutional vulnerability is a lack of high-quality, up-to-date, disaggregated data on many of the vulnerable groups identified here. The 2030 Agenda's emphasis on 'leaving no one behind' acknowledges that the 'big picture' is not always the full picture. Data must be disaggregated by sex, age, location, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity, migration status and socio-economic background, among other characteristics. Data collection and disaggregation that allows for comparisons between groups is vital for leaving no one behind. It is also part of every states' human rights obligations – that is, to collect and publish data disaggregated by the grounds of discrimination recognized in international human rights law. Pakistan needs disaggregated data to monitor the achievement of SDG indicators for all, including marginalized groups. This will ensure that the Government knows where gaps in services exist and which groups are most in need.

Pakistan performs reasonably well in terms of reporting on SDG indicators. However, capturing progress in statistical terms remains a challenge. It is unclear whether Pakistan is performing well on several SDG targets due to a lack of disaggregated, up-to-date data. Only 55% of all SDG indicators have data available (see Annex III), require

computation, or data could be made available with minor efforts.¹⁰³ Data are usually disaggregated by age group, sex and urban-rural location, but not by disability, migration or minority status. The disaggregation of SDG indicators involves significant data requirements and operational challenges for national statistical systems.

Mapping international human rights commitments

There are nine core human rights conventions, of which Pakistan has ratified seven:

- the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), ratified on 23 June 2010;
- the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR), ratified on 17 April 2008;
- the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), ratified on 12 March 1996;
- the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (ICERD), ratified on 2 September 1966;
- the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD), ratified on 5 July 2011;
- the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), ratified on 20 November 1990; and
- the *Convention against Torture* (CAT), ratified on 23 June 2010.

Pakistan's commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action and the International Conference on Population and Development are remarkable because they recognize that reproductive health and rights, as well as women's empowerment and gender equality, are cornerstones of population and development programmes. In November 2019, Pakistan reaffirmed its ICPD commitments in Nairobi, Kenya¹⁰⁴ (see Annex V for details on national legislation related to international human rights commitments and leaving no one behind). Pakistan has also ratified all eight ILO Conventions on the *Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* (FPRW). These include the rights to freedom of association, to organize and collective bargaining, the abolition of forced labour, non-discrimination



in employment and the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

Although Pakistan has ratified most global human rights treaties and is making efforts to implement them, more needs to be done to ensure transparent, accountable, inclusive and rights-based governance. It is imperative that civil society participates meaningfully in governance. It is equally vital to improve the quality of, and access to, legal services and the judicial system.

Conclusion and recommendations

When the 2030 Agenda was adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, they explicitly committed to leaving no one behind. This is a broad promise to address the pervasive and damaging problems of inequality and exclusion. Simply put, a leaving no one behind agenda is not identical to a national development agenda. Government systems may strengthen national progress on average, while doing little for disadvantaged groups and individuals. As such, relevant SDG targets should be reframed and made more precise. They need to focus on *specific* people, facing *specific* problems, in *specific* places.

Leaving no one behind should not be regarded as separate from national efforts to achieve the SDGs. It is common for authorities to use the rhetoric of leaving no one behind before reverting back to traditional development strategies in their programming. This Common Country Analysis identifies four imperatives for turning the rhetoric of leaving no one behind into action in Pakistan:

1. **Closing data gaps:** Almost all the groups that are lagging behind in Pakistan are less visible in statistics. This makes them difficult to track and virtually invisible to policy makers. Pakistan must upgrade current data sets disaggregated by gender, age and other characteristics, which will require considerable investment and coordination.
2. **Adopting integrated and gender-responsive cross-sectoral planning processes for *specific* people facing *specific* problems in *specific* places:** The analysis demonstrates that multiple drivers of vulnerability often impact the same vulnerable group. The drivers

themselves are interlinked. Therefore, approaches to address the needs of the most vulnerable people in Pakistan require a greater integration of gender-responsive development efforts. Social protection must be embedded in national development agendas with adequate resource allocations. Concerted efforts are needed to include the ‘missing middle’ – that is, workers in the informal economy, migrants, residents of informal urban settlements, people in remote areas, and those who face legal and physical barriers to access.¹⁰⁵

3. **Turning political commitments into development action:** While the Federal Government oversees the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, financing and accountability for achieving the SDGs is shared with the provinces. The SDGs’ emphasis on inequality, access and justice will increase the scrutiny of provincial policies.
4. **Minimizing the development-humanitarian divide:** Close collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, alongside the Government, is vital. Several vulnerable groups in Pakistan are addressed by both humanitarian and development efforts. Only if humanitarian and development efforts go hand-in-hand can Pakistan realize the promise of leaving no one behind.



Section 5.

Multidimensional risks

Pakistan faces several multidimensional risks that are often ignored in development frameworks. Approaches to addressing risks have been narrow, which hampers efforts to meaningfully address challenges. The prevalence of longstanding, unresolved risks makes the country susceptible to crises. Intertwined risks – prompted by the national political economy and socio-cultural context – transform the development landscape, making it difficult to implement policies and development initiatives. Risk-informed development requires risk-based decision-making processes. These enable development to become more sustainable and resilient to a complex, evolving risk landscape.

Key multidimensional risks in Pakistan include socio-economic and political instability, a lack of democratic space, limited social cohesion, inequality, discrimination, environmental degradation and climate change, as discussed below (also see the *Risk Mitigation Matrix* in [Annex VII](#) for a summary of risks and proposed ways to mitigate them).

Emerging risks and Pakistan's development trajectory

Risks to socio-economic stability

Economic instability in Pakistan is rooted in pervasive social inequality, a lack of equitable access to resources and opportunities, and limited accountability for upholding rights or addressing multifaceted inequalities and exclusion. The country's economic situation is challenging. As discussed in section 1, real GDP growth is estimated to have declined from 1.9% in FY19 to -1.5% in FY20. This first contraction in decades reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, itself following a period of monetary and fiscal tightening. The pandemic is expected to set back many of Pakistan's gains on poverty reduction and social development. While the poverty rate has

declined by 40% in the last two decades – falling from 64.3% in 2001–02 to 24.3% by 2015 and lifting more than 23 million people out of poverty – the International Monetary Fund projects a sharp rise in poverty of up to 40%.

According to the 2030 Agenda, meeting the needs of a growing population, while ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources, is the greatest challenge of our time. The United Nations Population Division projects that, with 'medium variant' fertility rates, Pakistan's population will grow to 338 billion by 2050. At a national symposium in November 2018, Pakistan's Prime Minister highlighted population growth as an issue that demands urgent attention. To achieve its development goals, Pakistan needs to accelerate efforts towards balanced growth. The Government's strategic vision is reflected in the Supreme Court's initiative on population dynamics and family planning. This produced eight recommendations, endorsed by the Council of Common Interests, to advance human rights-based population programmes at the national and provincial levels, uphold reproductive rights and promote family planning.

Pakistan faces immense challenges and opportunities as its growing youth population enters adulthood. To turn this 'youth bulge' into a demographic dividend, Pakistan needs to reduce fertility and invest in long-term human capital development, including education, skills and decent work for youth. If births begin to decline each year, the young dependent population will also decline. This will free up resources for investments in health care, education and economic infrastructure.

Pakistan also faces significant economic risks. Exports and imports have shrunk as global trade and domestic demand have plummeted. Consumer price inflation rose from an average of 6.8% in FY19 to an average of 10.7% in FY20, prompted by inflation in food prices, hikes in administered energy prices and a weaker Pakistani Rupee, which depreciated by 13.8% against the United States Dollar in FY20. Pakistan's economic outlook is dampened by further risks, most notably a rise in COVID-19 infections, locust attacks and heavy monsoon rains that could cause widespread crop damage, food insecurity and inflationary pressure. Pakistan would do well to take pre-emptive



measures and expand social safety nets – such as the *Ehsaas* programme – to mitigate risks to its economy and prevent millions from being left behind.

Risks to democratic space and political stability

Ensuring political stability was among the foremost challenges for the Government of Pakistan in 2020, with serious consequences for the functioning of democratic institutions, fundamental rights, economic growth and foreign investment. Uncertainty in the political landscape affected governance and economic reforms. The Government was unable to push any laws through Parliament – such as electoral reforms – due to a lack of support from opposition parties, particularly in the Senate. Unrest among opposition parties, stirred up by corruption cases against them, affected the Government's pursuit of its economic and accountability agenda. Uncertainty continued on the western border with Afghanistan as peace negotiations dragged on between major stakeholders, including the Taliban and the Government of the United States of America. Given the countries' geographic proximity and social linkages, Pakistan has a crucial role to play for peace and security in Afghanistan (see section 9).

Meeting the expectations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) poses another substantial challenge to Pakistan's economic and political stability. The risk of being blacklisted by the Task Force continued in 2019 and 2020, bringing with it the prospect of international sanctions. Pakistan undertook extensive administrative and regulatory reforms in the financial sector to mitigate this risk. However, the Task Force is not only concerned with technical weaknesses in the financial system, but also with geo-political concerns. Avoiding blacklisting and restoring Pakistan's normal status requires sustained diplomatic efforts. Political stability, therefore, also hinges on how well the Government addresses opposition protests, improves the economy and governance, and navigates international and regional challenges.

Sensitive geopolitical contexts, the rise of cyber-attacks, major data breaches, hacking, violent extremism and radicalization have led many

countries to adopt security measures and counter-terrorism laws. These have increased the scrutiny of, and restrictions on, participation. This is especially true for civil society, individual citizens and dissenting voices. Civil society actors often challenge decision-makers on issues tied to security and identity, such as responses to terrorism, refugee crises or the treatment of minorities. In Pakistan, nationalist sentiment has led to shrinking civic space in an attempt to reduce such criticism. The argument against foreign funding also has nationalistic undercurrents: some non-governmental organizations that accept foreign funding have been accused of being 'unpatriotic' or 'anti-development'. Other reasons for shrinking democratic space include market fundamentalism, protectionism and the changing global aid landscape. In some cases, restrictions on freedom are unintended by-products of well-intentioned security packages.

The evolving role of the digital media has profoundly affected the relationship between citizens and the state. It has empowered citizens with more information and enabled governments to improve transparency and accountability. However, its growing use has also raised serious concerns around the authenticity of information.

Justice and the rule of law

The rule of law is vital for sustainable development. It requires that legal processes, institutions and substantive norms that are consistent with human rights, including the core principles of equality and accountability before the law, as well as fairness in the protection and realization of fundamental rights. Pakistan faces significant challenges in ensuring access to justice for all and providing an equitable, efficient judicial system, particularly at the level of the lower judiciary. Guaranteeing that judicial and law enforcement institutions are corruption-free and that they are staffed by adequate, competent human resources, also poses challenges. There is a severe shortage of judges in the country, with many vacant posts in district and high courts. Understaffing affects courts' performance nationwide. A lack of well-trained prosecutors keeps conviction rate low, at between 5% and 10%.¹⁰⁶



It is estimated that corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion cost developing countries US\$1.26 trillion every year – funds that could lift the world's poor above the threshold of US\$1.25 per day for at least six years.¹⁰⁷ Pakistan would do well to consider restructuring its judicial system to better uphold the rule of law, achieve transparency and secure equitable access to justice for all.

The environment and climate change

Climate change is placing immense pressure on developing countries like Pakistan, as increasingly frequent natural disasters and severe hazards take a toll on lives, livelihoods, ecosystems, the economy and sustainable development. Climate change poses particular risks for farmers' financial sustainability – a major challenge for Pakistan's economy, which is heavily dependent on agriculture. As noted above, the *Global Climate Risk Index 2020* ranks Pakistan as the fifth most vulnerable country in the world to the impact of climate change. Between 1999 and 2018, Pakistan suffered 152 extreme weather events, incurring economic losses of US\$3.8 billion.

The *National Climate Change Policy* (NCCP) of 2012 is Pakistan's guiding policy document on climate change mitigation. It acknowledges the growing risk of extreme natural hazards due to climate change and outlines vulnerabilities faced by individual sectors, eco-regions and socio-economic groups. In the context of the *National Climate Change Policy*, the goal is to mainstream climate change as a priority in the Government's development agenda. This can be achieved by developing and implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes related to sustainable energy, water management and ecosystem conservation.

Following the 18th Amendment to the Constitution in 2010, responsibility for 'environmental pollution and ecology' – and therefore for climate change – was devolved to the provinces. Although the Federal Ministry of Climate Change is the national focal point for the implementation of international agreements and treaties on the environment and climate change, implementing them requires complex coordination with the provinces. The division of responsibilities between federal and provincial governments hampers institutional

clarity and the adoption of clear working protocols on climate change.

To date, the *National Climate Change Policy* framework has not been used to prepare detailed local adaptation plans. Nor has it been used as a guiding document for decision makers. A *Climate Change Act* was passed by Parliament in March 2017 to fast-track measures needed to implement action on the ground. It also aims to provide the highest level of strategic guidance to oversee the implementation of the *National Climate Change Policy* and mainstream climate change concerns in federal and provincial decision-making.

Regional and global influences

Regional, cross-border and transnational elements directly impact countries' political, socio-economic and environmental indicators. These elements range from poverty to conflict management, illicit financial and cross-border crime, and other associated challenges.

South Asia is home to the largest concentration of the world's poor (around 40%). Recent global turmoil and slowing economic growth threaten to reverse the region's considerable gains on poverty reduction. Yet, the crisis also offers opportunities to boost intraregional trade through greater cooperation and integration, in order to compensate for reduced demand from developed states. Regional integration can increase capacities to connect with global production networks and participate more efficiently in the global economy. Pakistan is part of several initiatives which are likely to benefit the region, most notably the multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Apart from its potential impact on growth and development through greater integration and cross-border infrastructure in Central and South Asia, CPEC may reduce the likelihood of regional conflicts by bolstering mutual dependence. Investments involve coordination, connectivity and cooperation between two or more countries either through bilateral agreements or regional institutions, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). International partners and organizations can offer significant support for harmonizing regional and global linkages.



For instance, Pakistan is Afghanistan's largest trading partner, while Afghanistan is Pakistan's second-largest export market. While an agreement was signed in 2010 to strengthen trade relations and facilitate Afghan transit trade through Pakistan, its implementation has been mixed. Complaints abound on both sides of the border about barriers to exchange. Peaceful economic cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, underpinned by improved trade and transit facilities, could help connect South Asia with Central Asia. This would pay significant economic and social dividends.

Links between COVID-19 and multidimensional risks

Public health and COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the delivery of essential health service declined worldwide, especially in low-income countries.¹⁰⁸ By the end of 2020, more than 87 million people had contracted COVID-19 and 1.8 million had died. Pakistan reported 482,178 COVID-19 cases and 10,176 deaths in 2020.¹⁰⁹

The pandemic has placed enormous pressure on Pakistan's health system. The sheer scale of COVID-19 patients in need of acute or intensive care has restricted capacities to provide routine services. The pandemic has disrupted reproductive, maternal, neonatal and adolescent healthcare, as well as services for communicable and non-communicable diseases.¹¹⁰ Disruptions are caused by supply issues, such as shortages of personal protective equipment, medical equipment and staff, and the closure of health facilities during lockdowns.¹¹¹ People's utilization of essential health services also declined.¹¹² This is partly because non-pharmacological interventions to slow the spread of COVID-19 limited mobility, such as lockdowns and social distancing.¹¹³ Others did not access health care for fear of exposure to the virus at health centres, the disruption of transport services, and because they could not afford services if they lost their jobs during the pandemic.¹¹⁴

Pakistan has a doctor-to-population ratio of 0.96 per 1,000 people, and a nurse, midwife or Lady

Health Worker ratio of 0.49.¹¹⁵ When the pandemic began, the country had 194,000 public and private sector medical practitioners. Just 30,000 of them served in intensive care units.¹¹⁶ At the community level, community-based cadres of Lady Health Workers (LHWs) and Community Midwives (CMWs) were engaged to link critical COVID-19 cases with healthcare providers. In addition to their regular duties, these community-based health workers disseminated information on preventive measures, isolation and quarantine facilities. To mitigate the intense pressure on health workers, many out-of-work medical professionals, including non-active women physicians, volunteered to fill vacant positions. A number of volunteers also joined the Prime Minister's 'Relief Tiger Force' that called on youths to provide food for the poor and raise awareness of COVID-19 among communities.¹¹⁷

Mitigation

Responding to public health emergencies requires effective government institutions capable of delivering preventive and emergency medical care, while maintaining other essential public services. Regardless of the exigencies of any crisis, institutions must discharge their basic functions in line with their agreed rules and procedures, and without compromising people's rights.

Pakistan has striven to mitigate various risks during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has created a multi-stakeholder National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) – including members of opposition parties – to oversee Pakistan's COVID-19 response. The NCOC is working in close coordination with Command and Operation Centres at the provincial level. The country is spearheading a robust response to keep economic disruption, social unrest and political instability at bay by expanding the *Ehsaas* programme and supporting people most affected by the crisis.

Pakistan's handling of the pandemic has improved its global standing, drawing praise from the international community, including the UN. Its 'smart' lockdown approach – as opposed to a full lockdown – maintained economic activity while keeping the number of confirmed infections relatively low. 'Smart lockdowns' aim to restrict



infections by targeting identified hotspots with a high prevalence rate – rather than closing entire cities or regions – in order to contain the spread of COVID-19. This involves increased epidemiological interventions, such as testing, tracing, quarantining and isolating suspected and confirmed cases in hotspots.¹¹⁸ During these smart lockdowns, key institutions – including the judiciary and law enforcement agencies – continued to provide basic services to the public, while following Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic poses significant risks of corruption and mismanagement. Massive resources mobilized to respond to the health and economic crises wrought by COVID-19 create opportunities for corruption, while many corruption prevention and enforcement mechanisms may be affected by the ongoing emergency. Pakistan would do well to ensure that its governance institutions continue functioning efficiently and effectively to mitigate such risks.



Section 6.

Economic transformation

Pakistan's economy is the 23rd largest in the world in terms of its total purchasing power parity (PPP). As discussed in section 1, the World Bank's *World Development Indicators* (WDI) consider it a lower-middle income country with the 42nd largest economy in terms of nominal GDP. It ranked 154th globally based on its nominal GDP per capita of US\$1,285.7 in 2019 and 132nd based on its PPP per capita of US\$4,898.¹¹⁹ The informal, undocumented economy accounts for 36% of the economy as a whole.

Progress on macroeconomic indicators

Pakistan has experienced a downturn in economic growth since 2017. As discussed above, GDP growth declined from an estimated 5.5% in FY18 to 1.9% in FY19 and -1.5% in FY20 (see [Annex VIII](#)). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy was slowing down due to government stabilization policies geared towards cutting expenditure, increasing taxes and curtailing imports. A complete lockdown of three months (March–June 2020) to stem the spread of COVID-19 dealt a substantial shock to consumption and production. Negative growth largely reflects the effects of COVID-19 containment measures. However, stabilization measures put in place before the pandemic are starting to have an impact. Pakistan's current account deficit shrank from 4.8% of GDP in FY19 to 1.1% of GDP in FY20. This was driven by import values falling by 19.3%.¹²⁰ In the wake of the pandemic, total export values contracted by 7.5% due to weak global demand. Despite global deflation, workers' remittances increased in FY20 relative to FY19, underpinning a wider income account surplus.

In the past, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows were less than 1% of GDP.¹²¹ Yet in FY19, these inflows to Pakistan increased from US\$1.7 billion in


2018 to US\$2.2 billion, principally driven by large-scale Chinese investment.

Pakistan's economic situation is expected to improve in the coming years, although overall economic growth is projected to remain below its potential, averaging 1.3% in FY21–22.¹²² Experts estimate a V-shaped, rather than a gradual, post-pandemic recovery. This would cause the current account deficit to widen to an average of 1.5% of GDP in FY21–22. The fiscal deficit is projected to narrow to 7.4% in FY22, with the resumption of fiscal consolidation and stronger revenues driven by the recovery of economic activity and the dividends of structural reforms.

Industrial and agricultural growth

Agriculture, Pakistan's largest sector in terms of employment, directly employed 36% of the labour force in 2019.¹²³ As discussed in section 1, agriculture's impact on livelihoods goes further than direct employment. Most of the population's livelihoods depend on agriculture, either directly or indirectly. The sector accounts for 19% of the country's economic output. Agriculture's contribution to GDP has gradually decreased over time, from 24% in 2011 to 19.3% in 2019.¹²⁴ In FY20, the sector's performance improved slightly compared to FY19. However, there remains significant untapped potential for increasing value addition by boosting productivity, enhancing value chains and using modern technologies. The Prime Minister's new *Agriculture Emergency Programme*, worth PKR 277 billion, aims to revolutionize the agricultural and livestock sectors. This would be a boon to poverty reduction and sustainable socio-economic development, affecting a huge part of Pakistan's population.

The manufacturing sector is another driver of economic growth due to its forward and backward linkages with other economic sectors. As of 2019, it employed 16.1% of Pakistan's labour force and contributed 13%–14% of GDP.¹²⁵ Large-scale manufacturing (LSM) represents 78% of the manufacturing sector as a whole and 9.5% of the nation's GDP. Small-scale manufacturing (SSM) accounts for 15.2% of the sector, 2.04% of GDP and involves over 4 million establishments. FY19 was a hard year for large-scale manufacturing, which



recorded negative growth of -2.28%.¹²⁶ This subsector struggled to navigate an economic environment marked by exchange rate depreciation, and contractionary monetary and fiscal policies. Distress continued as negative growth in large-scale manufacturing plummeted to -5.4% in July–March FY20.

To support businesses and stimulate the economy, the State Bank of Pakistan has launched several credit support schemes and halved the policy rate. Export-oriented industries will receive tax refunds worth PKR 100 billion, alongside deferred interest payments. In a separate move, the Economic Coordination Committee approved a PKR 50.7 billion package to provide indirect cash flow support to small and medium-sized enterprises. This *Chota Karobar-o Sannat Imadadi Package* aims to benefit 3.5 million small businesses.

The service sector accounts for 60% of Pakistan's GDP, yet no public support unit has been created to address the challenges it faces. In light of the Government's growing interest in technology, ICT has been added as a potential sector under the *Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act* of 2012. An e-commerce strategy has also been recently developed to foster digital marketplaces.

Labour market and employment

Pakistan has the 9th largest labour force in the world, comprising 65.5 million people according to the *Labour Force Survey 2017–18*. Its labour force is predominantly young, given the country's high population growth rate. As discussed in section 1, young people between 20 and 24 years old experience the highest unemployment rate (11.56%) in Pakistan, over twice the overall unemployment rate (5.8%).¹²⁷ Unemployment is far higher among young women than young men. In the past decade, the unemployment rate among women in general has been nearly twice the rate among men.¹²⁸ Although women's labour force participation rate has nearly doubled from 13.3% in 1992 to 22.5% in 2018, according to the *Labour Force Survey 2017–18*¹²⁹ (or 22% according to the World Bank's estimates for 2020¹³⁰), it remains one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in South Asia and in the world.¹³¹

The *Labour Force Survey 2017–18* also reveals a range of other decent work deficits across Pakistan. These include excessive hours of work (40%), a high rate of youth not in education, employment or training (31%) and a pronounced gender wage gap (38.9%). Disparities linked to gender and geographic location are especially pronounced.

Preliminary estimates by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a negative impact on employment in FY2020. Some 1.4 million jobs will be lost, equivalent to 2.2% of the employed workforce. In response, government initiatives are striving to provide employment opportunities, especially for young people. The *Kamyab Jawan Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme* (PMKJ-YES), launched in October 2019, will disburse PKR 100 billion to 140,000 young entrepreneurs in the next five years to create 1 million employment opportunities for Pakistan's youth. Government efforts are also afoot to accelerate progress on SDG 5 ('Gender Equality'), including the collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated data, paired with quotas for women's employment in the public sector. Moves to address discrimination, bridge the gender pay gap and promote decent work in the care economy are emerging. Provincial governments are finalizing policies and laws that address home-based workers, domestic workers, violence and harassment, and maternity protection.

Trade and investment scenario

Pakistan's primary export commodities include textiles, garments, leather goods, sports goods, rice, chemicals and carpets. As of 2019, trade in goods and services accounted for 30% of the country's GDP.¹³² In 2018, Pakistan was the 69th largest economy in the world in terms of total exports and the 49th largest in total imports. Estimates show that the 'value added' of the service sector declined by 60–70% in April–June 2020, while manufacturing declined by around 40% and agriculture by 20%.

Pakistan's trade structure has been characterized by deficits, with exports remaining sluggish on the back of a lack of competitiveness. As noted in section 1, the trade deficit widened to US\$32.6



billion in 2018¹³³ as imports grew much faster than exports. Over the years, Pakistan's export composition has been static. Its three largest export commodities – textiles (mainly cotton products), leather and rice – have accounted for over 70% of total exports in the past decade. Petroleum products are the largest single category of imports, accounting for almost 25.6% of total imports bills, followed by machinery (15%) and chemical products (10%).

Trade in services accounted for 5% of Pakistan's GDP in 2018. In a bid to expand market access, Pakistan has been party to several preferential trade agreements (PTAs). To date, it has implemented 11 preferential trade agreements, covering 32.2% of its global exports and 45.3% of global imports – both preferential and non-preferential.¹³⁴ It is important to highlight that Pakistan's tariff policies are not optimized. A lack of local standards and the limited enforcement of existing standards result in suboptimal outcomes.

High trade costs are another limiting factor, largely caused by inefficient transport and trade facilitation. Pakistan's bilateral trade costs with neighbouring countries are roughly 120% on an 'ad valorem' basis – twice the average cost of trade between countries in East and Southeast Asia. Because of these prohibitively high trade costs, Pakistan's export potential with South Asian partners remains grossly underused. Assessments reveal that Pakistan's regional exports are less than 14% of their estimated minimum potential levels.¹³⁵

Challenges to Pakistan's economy

Key challenges to economic growth in Pakistan include inadequate infrastructure, weak governance, overregulation, underperforming institutions, inadequate human resources, limited research and development, a lack of policy implementation, the excessive nature of certain taxes and limited access to finance. Challenges faced by SMEs and large-scale industries are also linked to a lack of product diversification, value addition, innovation and compliance with international standards. Low investment in human development and a dearth of skilled workers are other major concerns.

In fiscal terms, the high cost of capital limits industrial competitiveness. Energy crises and high circular debt directly or indirectly impact all economic sectors. The agricultural sector is greatly affected by growing land fragmentation and locust swarms. The COVID-19 pandemic poses an additional downside risk to growth prospects as it hampers consumer demand, exports, businesses and industries. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimates that COVID-19 could cost Pakistan's economy between US\$16.387 million and \$4.95 billion, or 0.01% to 1.57% of GDP. This loss would slash Pakistan's GDP by at least 1.57% and trigger 946,000 job losses. While projections by other entities vary – such as the IMF, as discussed above – they all anticipate large-scale economic challenges and job losses.

Ways forward

Relative to Pakistan's size, levels of manufacturing are low. This indicates obstacles to inclusiveness in the manufacturing sector, which relies on low-tech skills, even in major industries like textiles. Skills development should be prioritized in domains related to manufacturing, underpinned by policies that empower people to understand and claim their rights. Such industrial policies must increase the ability and accountability of individuals and institutions to respect, protect and fulfil these rights.


As manufacturing is heavily concentrated in the textile and apparel industries, this saturates their scope for employment generation. Therefore, it is vital to diversify the manufacturing sector, increase value addition, and shift from low-tech to medium- and high-tech industries. To remain competitive in the global marketplace, it is important that Pakistan improves infrastructure while upholding environmental and social standards. Developing a statistical system to measure and monitor the economy, including labour statistics, will be helpful. The Government of Pakistan has also developed policies the country's first policies related to green growth, the blue economy and digital transformation. This will help to promote these sectors and open up new avenues for growth.

Leveraging the immense potential of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Pakistan should focus



on regional integration with Central and South Asia for socio-economic development, interoperability and the effective, sustainable utilization of its resources. Despite challenges, progress is underway on CPEC projects.

Pakistan should also proactively work with neighbouring countries to advance multimodal connectivity. They can build on complimentary alternative modes of transport that are available along major regional corridors. Collaboration is needed to facilitate synergies between overlapping national and international transport projects and programmes. It is important to introduce conducive legal and regulatory regimes through transport agreements, to use technical support from multilateral or intergovernmental organizations, and to mobilize resources from public, private, national and international investors. Operationalizing sub-regional transport corridors also requires an integrated approach to regional transport and trade facilitation reforms. These include facilitation measures for speedy cargo clearance mechanisms, intermodal transfer terminals, the use of ICT, and modern cargo security and inspection systems. This calls for institutional cooperation, sharing responsibilities on developing and upgrading infrastructure, and aligning transport policies between host countries. Pakistan can enhance collaboration by actively participating in regional transport development initiatives under the aegis of sub-regional organizations like the Economic Cooperation Organization and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.¹³⁶



Section 7.

The environment and climate change

Pakistan is facing the reality of climate change, manifest most visibly in its frequent exposure to extreme weather events. Its vulnerability to climate change is inextricably linked to arid and semi-arid climatic conditions, rapid population growth, environmental degradation, increased water scarcity and severe temperature and rainfall variations in a country that relies heavily on monsoon rains and the glacier-fed Indus River Basin. As discussed in sections 1 and 5, these conditions contribute to low agricultural productivity and sluggish economic growth, which exacerbate poverty, food insecurity, hunger and displacement. Such challenges, in turn, undermine people's coping capacities. Thus, climate change is placing immense strain on environmental and socio-economic sustainability nationwide.

Pakistan's dependence on natural resources makes it imperative to treat environmental management as a central part of development. To address climate-related challenges, Pakistan needs an enabling environment that can mitigate their catastrophic effects on water, land, other natural resources and vulnerable populations. Yet several barriers impede sustainable, climate-sensitive natural resource management, as discussed below.

Barriers to sustainable natural resource management

Institutional capacities and coordination: The overall policy and institutional framework for resource management is characterized by limited institutional coordination and regulatory enforcement at the national, provincial and local levels.

Unsustainable consumption and production patterns: For every US\$1 of GDP, the consumption of natural resources per capita is much higher in Pakistan than in developed states and many developing countries. According to global data

compiled by the UN on SDG indicator 12.2.2, 'Domestic material consumption per unit of GDP' (kilogrammes per constant 2010 US\$), Pakistan's consumption rate was 3.70 kg/US\$ in 2017. This is far higher than in Bangladesh (2.44 kg/US\$), Sri Lanka (1.30 kg/US\$) and the average for Europe and North America (0.41 kg/US\$).¹³⁷

Urban sprawl: Rapid population growth, urbanization and the conversion of land use degrades urban ecology. It causes the deterioration of natural resources, deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, the degradation of marine and coastal resources, and increased air and water pollution.

Inadequate early warning systems, hazard monitoring and risk communication: Decision-makers and the public lack access to information on climate risks and early warnings. This prevents effective preparedness and disaster risk reduction. Nevertheless, significant progress has been made since the devastating Hindu Kush Earthquake in 2005, such as the introduction of the *Disease Early Warning System* in 2010. By 2015, several districts were covered by the *Integrated Flood Analysis System* (IFAS). In 2017, the Pakistan Meteorological Department operationalized a Specialized Medium-Range Weather Forecasting Centre (SMRFC). It makes medium-range forecasts available nationwide every 3–10 days using a high performance computing system for vulnerable districts. The centre is especially accurate in measuring the intensity of rainfall.

Despite these advances, communicating warnings to communities remains a challenge. Monitoring, forecasting and early warning systems should be aligned to disaster risk reduction mechanisms that exist on the ground. If these systems and mechanisms inform one another, community preparedness and response will improve manifold.

A lack of integration of climate change and the environment in decision-making: Climate change and environmental sustainability are not well-integrated in planning and decision-making in Pakistan. This is due to a lack of coordination between institutions and sectors, as well as the limited integration of information and analytical tools. For instance, water use in agriculture remains unregulated because water monitoring efforts are not well-integrated, data are not



available and agricultural policies are not effectively implemented.

Lack of data availability and access: Pakistan lacks information to guide effective, sustainable natural resource management. Moreover, stakeholders often lack access to vital information, such as weather advisory services, alongside climate-smart production technologies, credit, knowledge bases and skills. This lack of data availability is exacerbated by low literacy levels. Available data can only be effectively communicated in certain ways. The mass media has not been sensitized on environmental issues. All of these factors combine to prevent the development of a proper environmental risk assessment system.¹³⁸

Impacts of climate change

As discussed in sections 1 and 5, the *Global Climate Risk Index* (CRI) ranks Pakistan as the world's fifth most vulnerable country to the impacts of climate change. Its CRI score is 28.83, calculated based on four indicators: the total number of deaths, the number of deaths per 100 000 inhabitants, the sum of losses in purchasing power parity and losses per unit of GDP.¹³⁹ Between 1999 and 2018, Pakistan was hit by 152 extreme weather events, causing 9,989 deaths, economic losses of US\$3.8 billion and untold devastation to the lives, livelihoods and food security of vulnerable populations.¹⁴⁰ The annual average loss (AAL) from disasters in Pakistan is estimated at 6.77% of GDP, far above the average for Asia and the Pacific (2.4%).¹⁴¹

Climate change has serious impacts on all aspects of sustainable development in Pakistan – economic, social and environmental. The mega floods of 2010 decimated infrastructure, hampered access to food and basic services, increased the need for immediate external assistance and left 90 million people food-insecure.¹⁴² Droughts in 2013–2015 and 2018–2019 compromised the nutrition and food security of an estimated 2 million¹⁴³ and 5 million people¹⁴⁴, respectively. Since 2019, desert locust swarms have plagued 46 districts across Pakistan's four provinces. Of the country's total land area, 161,720 km² were declared especially susceptible to locust attacks.¹⁴⁵ Heavy snowfall, rain and avalanches in January 2020 affected 1 million households in Pakistan Administered

Kashmir, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.¹⁴⁶ In August–September 2020, torrential monsoon rains and subsequent floods affected 4.24 million people in Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Some 2.2 million of them required agricultural and livestock-related aid. Roughly half of all affected households in Sindh lacked enough money to purchase food. It is worth noting that disasters like droughts and floods tend to recur in the same areas periodically, devastating the same vulnerable populations time and time again.

Climate change is also driving countries towards green economies. This transition has far-reaching implications for the labour market. Some jobs will disappear, while new jobs will be created. Many workers will need to re-skill and adopt different work practices, involving the use of new technologies to improve resource efficiency and reduce wastage. It is imperative that the Government of Pakistan embraces a comprehensive policy approach that stimulates investment in green sectors, while simultaneously enhancing workers' skills and employability.

Smallholder farmers comprise a significant proportion of the population most vulnerable to climate change in Pakistan. Most are resource-deficient, rely on subsistence agriculture and unstable daily wage work, and periodically experience moderate or severe food insecurity. Assessments of disasters' effects on vulnerable people in Pakistan highlight a number of challenges, including:

- the disruption of agricultural and livestock production, which reduces livelihood options;
- lower crop yields and damage to irrigation infrastructure;
- negative coping strategies among groups hit by disasters, which drives up food insecurity and malnutrition;
- the higher prevalence of diseases and other health problems;
- internal rural-to-urban migration triggered by climate change, which puts unsustainable pressure on urban infrastructure;

- the reduced availability of potable water; and
- increasing environmental degradation.

Agriculture

Pakistan's critical agriculture sector is increasingly vulnerable to short-term climatic variability and long-term climate change. This is especially because of the arid and semi-arid climate, as well as significant dependence on a single glacier-fed river system.¹⁴⁷ Crops grown in irrigated areas and under spate farming systems are greatly affected by the availability of water and the variability of temperature.¹⁴⁸ Changing climatic conditions – including rainfall, humidity and temperature – are expected to adversely affect agricultural yields, especially in arid and semi-arid areas. They will slash productivity by shortening the length of the growing season, increasing crop losses, reducing the availability and quality of natural resources, and driving up water logging and salinity, which cause land degradation and soil erosion.¹⁴⁹ The amount of water available for agriculture will continue to plummet. By 2050, rising temperatures during growing seasons and variations in the monsoon season are expected to reduce cereal yields by 6%–12%. The yields of vegetables and tropical fruits are projected to decline by 5%–13%.¹⁵⁰

Livestock rearing, a huge part of agriculture in Pakistan, is highly vulnerable to climate change. Heat stress reduces the milk yields of dairy animals. Drought makes feed and fodder unavailable, leaving animals to starve to death. Floods degrade grazing systems and make waterborne diseases more prevalent, killing vast populations of animals on whom small-scale farmers depend.

It is worth noting that, while agriculture is at risk from climate change, it also contributes to it. Combined, agriculture and livestock account for over 45% of Pakistan's greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁵¹

Water

Pakistan is the third most water-stressed country in the world. Another likely impact of global warming is the recession of Himalayan glaciers, the country's largest source of fresh water. Overall, Pakistan's

water sector is among the most sensitive to the impacts of climate change.

Despite this, Pakistan has the fourth highest rate of 'water use intensity' – that is, the amount of water, in cubic metres, used per unit of GDP.¹⁵² Roughly 90% of available fresh water supplies are used for agriculture and 90% of agricultural land lies in the Indus River Basin. This area is highly susceptible to climate change due to its arid climatic conditions, 150–250 mm of average precipitation per year, and its dependence on melting snow and glaciers for irrigation. Rising temperatures cause rapid evaporation and sedimentation, hampering water storage capacities. River flows are variable and glacial monitoring infrastructure is lacking. While per capita water availability declines, demand for irrigation water is growing.

In addition to water scarcity, water productivity is extremely low in Pakistan. This is due to excessive reliance on traditional irrigation methods which cause massive water losses, deep percolation and evaporation.¹⁵³

An estimated 20% of Pakistan's population has access to clean drinking water. Most people are obliged to use polluted water sources. The main source of pollution is faecal pollution, given the country's chronic lack of adequate sewerage and wastewater treatment. Waterborne diseases cause losses of PKR 25–58 billion per year. An estimated 200,000 children in Pakistan die from diarrhoeal diseases every year.

Forests

Deforestation is occurring at an alarming rate in Pakistan: 27,000 hectares per year. This is due to decades of felling, natural disasters, the use of forest area for agriculture, the expansion of rural infrastructure, overgrazing and poor harvesting practices. More than 70% of Pakistan's natural forests are understocked. As such, their production, services and functions have deteriorated. Pakistan's range and pasture resources account for 65% of its land resources. These too are under severe pressure from overgrazing, as are the country's vital mangrove forests. These protect coastal areas from erosion and storm surge, while slowing climate change by storing large amounts of carbon. For mangrove



forests, climate risks include increasing sedimentation, less fresh water inflow and the outgrowth of invasive species.¹⁵⁴ Pakistan urgently needs proper forest management based on the principles of integrated natural resource management (INRM).

Energy

Given its high greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), the energy sector is the sector that contributes most to climate change in Pakistan. The sector is also highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change. Traditionally, agriculture in Pakistan depended on a huge network of canals; it now increasingly relies on energy-consuming groundwater pumps to meet irrigation needs. Millions of tube wells are used for water pumping and farm operations in Punjab, for instance, accounting for up to one-fifth of the province's energy consumption. As rising temperatures affect evapotranspiration rates, this will increase the need for electricity to pump water for irrigation. At present, hydropower resources supply 30% of Pakistan's electricity, making them a key resource for the energy sector. By 2030, hydropower will provide a projected 32.7 million kilowatts. Yet the depletion of water resources threatens to diminish the reliability of hydropower supplies.

According to the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, climate change will affect the energy sector through extreme weather events. These include floods, storms and drought that may affect energy sources and distribution infrastructure. Major gas fields located near the Indus River are particularly at risk of damage from floods.¹⁵⁵

Cities and human settlements

Increasingly frequent urban flooding and severe heatwaves are devastating effects of climate change in Pakistan. These decimate health outcomes by prompting widespread vectorborne, waterborne and airborne diseases. Rapid urbanization and industrial growth pose further environmental challenges, such as toxic air and water pollution, alongside hazardous solid waste and the degradation of ecosystems. Most waste is disposed of through open dumps and open

burning. This seriously harms the environment by driving up greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating air and water pollution, and contaminating soil and bodies of water. Plastic waste is rapidly damaging Pakistan's land and marine ecosystems. Hazardous waste – including waste from industries and hospitals – poses a major threat to the health of humans, biodiversity and ecosystems alike.

Fundamental rights

In 2009, a report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) described how the observed and projected impacts of climate change have implications for human rights. States, it concludes, have a duty to address climate change's effects on human rights regardless of whether the state has contributed to climate change in a manner that gives rise to specific human rights violations.¹⁵⁶ OHCHR also recognizes that climate change “*poses a serious threat to indigenous peoples, who often live in marginal lands and fragile ecosystems which are particularly sensitive to alterations in the physical environment.*”¹⁵⁷ The *Cancun Agreements* of 2010 recognize that gender equality and women's participation are vital for effective action on all aspects of climate change.¹⁵⁸ They highlight the need to “*fully account*” for the adverse effects of climate change on children.¹⁵⁹ In addition, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* outlines additional requirements for protecting children in the context of climate change.¹⁶⁰

Pakistan is a signatory of key international frameworks that affirm its commitment to human rights – including in the face of climate change. As noted above, these include the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the *United Nations Convention on Biodiversity*, the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC), the *United Nations Convention on Desertification* and the *Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants*. Article 38(d) of the Constitution of Pakistan also guarantees the:

provision of fundamental necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter, education



*and medical relief, for all Pakistani citizens without any discrimination irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment.*¹⁶¹

Other significant state obligations include ensuring “people’s wellbeing by equitable distribution of wealth and means of production, and rights between landlords and tenants (Article 38(a)), provision of work opportunities and adequate livelihoods (Article 38(b)), reduce income disparities (Article 38(e)).”¹⁶²

Despite these commitments, food security remains a serious concern in Pakistan. Some 12.3% of Pakistanis are undernourished, two-fifths (84 million people) are multidimensionally poor and one-quarter live below the national poverty line. The prevalence of wasting is 17.7% according to the *National Nutrition Survey 2018*, far above the World Health Organization’s (WHO) emergency threshold of 15%.¹⁶³

Human rights law imposes various procedural obligations on governments to address the environmental impacts of their activities. The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* also directs states to promote and facilitate “public participation in addressing climate change and its effects and developing adequate responses.”¹⁶⁴ In terms of Pakistan’s *National Climate Policy* and its implementation framework, the case of *Leghari v. Federation of Pakistan* is worth highlighting. In this instance, a Pakistani farmer sued the Government for failing to enforce its climate policy. In its Order of 4 September 2015, an appellate court issued a landmark decision, stating that “the delay and lethargy of the State in implementing the Framework offend the fundamental rights of the citizens which need to be safeguarded.”¹⁶⁵

Several policies promise measures to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth without undermining Pakistan’s dwindling natural resource base and ecosystems. A review of these policies suggests that climate change considerations are gaining traction. However, relatively few policies identify specific actions for reducing climate change-related risks (see [Annex IX](#)). The

connections between macroeconomic and sectoral policies, on the one hand, and cross-sectoral impacts, on the other, are not yet internalized in Pakistan.

Ways forward

Pakistan needs coordinated investments and consistent policies to mitigate climate risks and environmental degradation. These must be grounded on evidence-based diagnosis and a thorough understanding of sectoral connections. They should specify potential trade-offs and develop synergies for specific contexts. It is important to explore the link between energy, irrigation water and agriculture, paired with improved data collection and policy action. To create systems that can function for decades to come, the implications of water and energy must be evaluated. This is especially prescient as climate change continues to affect water supplies in the Indus River Basin, possibly causing disruptions in water flows across national boundaries. The use of multipurpose dams should be assessed in terms of the trade-offs between ensuring food security – by prioritizing the water supply for irrigation – and the cheap hydroelectric power needed in the industrial and domestic sectors.

It is also important for Pakistan to join collective regional efforts to combat climate change, which is essentially transboundary in nature. Above all, it is necessary to strengthen shared early warning systems and build capacities based on technological innovations in remote sensing, modelling and geographic information system (GIS)-based applications. This is crucial for the effective assessment and management of disaster risks. Regional cooperation would benefit from broad multilateral initiatives, such as the *Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System* (RIMES), supported by the *UNESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness*. The Asia-Pacific Disaster Resilience Network (APDRN) was created to support cooperation on early warning systems, functioning as a ‘network of networks’.¹⁶⁶ Regional institutions like the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM) can help to deepen data sharing mechanisms between states. The same is true for




institutional frameworks created under the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, including the association's Disaster Management Centre.¹⁶⁷ Pakistan should prioritize participation in these regional platforms as an important pillar of its strategies for building disaster resilience.

Effective adaptation to climate change must involve the use and ample supply of good quality inputs, such as climate-smart and heat-resistant varieties of crops.¹⁶⁸ It also requires changing cropping patterns to reduce the length of the growing season.¹⁶⁹ Other strategies include livelihood diversification, better food storage facilities, rearing improved livestock breeds, focusing on animal health, and using microfinance for agriculture and livestock insurance.¹⁷⁰ It is important to strengthen institutional and regulatory systems on data collection and use. This means using state-of-the-art technology for climate-responsive planning and development, as well as building farmers' resilience to climate change through skills, knowledge and technology. It also involves creating an enabling environment for continuous adaptation and the sustainable uptake of climate-resilient approaches. Farmers need to be supported to adopt on-farm water management practices, as well as more resilient cropping systems, practices and varieties to address heat stress and soil moisture retention. Sector-specific adaptations are needed, such as timely evacuation in the event of disasters, the availability of fodder stocks, the development of rangelands and a livestock surveillance programme to cope with climate extremes.¹⁷¹

To mitigate deforestation and associated climate risks, Pakistan needs a community-based participatory approach for reforestation and range management. Another way forward is agro-forestry, which can enhance crop yields, improve water quality and curb erosion.¹⁷²

Renewable technologies like solar power should be mainstreamed to reduce the burden on Pakistan's import bills and its reliance on heavily polluting fossil fuels. Participating in cross-border electricity trade (CBET) and promoting regional power trading arrangements through an integrated regional grid would be highly beneficial.¹⁷³ Promoting green jobs

for youth will yield particular dividends. Young workers and students are best placed to acquire new skills and competencies required by employers in the green economy. They also tend to have strong aspirations for work that benefits society as a whole, especially by advancing environmental sustainability.



Section 8.

Governance, legal frameworks and institutional capacity

Pakistan's performance on the World Bank's *Worldwide Governance Indicators* offers insights on how its governance landscape has changed over time.¹⁷⁴ The indicators consider six dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, political stability and the absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and efforts to control corruption.¹⁷⁵ Pakistan fared better in 2017 than in 2008 or 2012 on all six dimensions, particularly in terms of controlling corruption. In 2019, however, it performed worse on government effectiveness and the rule of law.¹⁷⁶ Overall, Pakistan continues to fare poorly compared to other South Asian countries, particularly on voice and accountability, political stability and the absence of violence, the rule of law, and controlling corruption. Its performance is weakest in terms of government effectiveness, where the regional average is in the 41st percentile and Pakistan falls in the 31st. As discussed above, the Government faces a review by the Financial Action Task Force, which has placed the country on a 'grey list' with an extensive action plan to implement.¹⁷⁷

After Pakistan's General Election in 2018, debates on democratic space in Pakistan focused on the use of presidential ordinances for legal reforms at the federal level. This was a concern because changes to agenda items on the federal legislative list are the mandate of the Senate and Parliament. According to the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, the same number of laws were introduced through presidential ordinances between August 2018 and August 2019 as the number of laws passed through Parliament.¹⁷⁸ International concerns have emerged about the implications of the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010), which devolved substantial power from the federal to the provincial levels, as discussed below.

Political representation in Pakistan remains heavily male-dominated.¹⁷⁹ Women's political participation is extremely low, despite the aspirations of the *Election Act* of 2017 and the Constitution. According to National Assembly data from 2015, women held between 60 and 61 reserved seats in the 12th, 13th and 14th National Assemblies. However, the number of women in general seats declined from 13 to 12 over time. There has been no increase in the number of seats reserved for minorities,¹⁸⁰ although they account for 4% of Pakistan's population.¹⁸¹ Ten seats in the National Assembly and four seats in the Senate continue are reserved for minorities, while variations exist between provincial assemblies.

Religious minorities suffer from both economic and political marginalization in Pakistan. The most recent statistics available, from 2010–11, indicate that only 2.6% of federal jobs are held by non-Muslims. Nearly 70% of these are in the lowest grades and none are in the highest grade.¹⁸² Minorities feature prominently in news reports due to their routine experiences of violence, discrimination and exclusion. The marginalization of religious minorities in Pakistan includes their absence in decision-making and the social development agenda, alongside direct violence. This includes reports of abductions, forced conversions, accusations of blasphemy, targeted killings and extremist attacks on places of worship.¹⁸³ In addition to religious minorities, other minority groups also face challenges in representation, which are exacerbated by the lack of reliable data across geographic locations. For example, multiple community-based organizations representing transgender persons in Pakistan rejected the results of the 2017 Population Census. This recorded 10,418 'third gender' persons in Pakistan, although estimates suggest that the transgender community is much larger.¹⁸⁴

The Census in 2017 identified only 0.48% of Pakistanis as persons with disabilities, far lower than the previous Census in 1998, which found that 2.49% of the population had some form of disability.¹⁸⁵ Of Pakistan's population of 220.9 million¹⁸⁶, the 2017 figure would mean that just 1.6 million people in the country have disabilities. By contrast, sample-based surveys indicate that slightly over 12% of Pakistanis (26 million people)



have some form of disability. This matters because planning for nearly 26 million persons with disabilities is very different from planning for just over 1 million, both in scale and scope.

Institutional capacity

Research by the Centre for Peace, Security and Development (CPSD) reveals that high-income groups in Pakistan are the most aware of their rights and legislative frameworks. Yet they represent a small fraction of the population.¹⁸⁷ In its concluding note on Pakistan in 2017, the United Nations Economic and Social Council's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights highlighted concerns in the *"areas of employment, social security, housing, health care and education."* Responsibility for all of these sectors was devolved to the provinces in 2010 through the 18th Amendment.

The 18th Amendment heralded a new and exciting time for Pakistan. It was seen as proof of the newly elected democratic government delivering on promises after seven years of military dictatorship. The Amendment requires each province to establish local governments, but does not specify overarching frameworks, guidelines or timeframes. While all four provinces held their first local government elections in 2015, the Supreme Court had to intervene to expedite the transfer of funds and power to elected governments in 2016.¹⁸⁸

As a result, local governance structures vary across the country. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is particularly decentralized. It devolved power beyond the traditional district, *tehsil* and union council levels to even lower tiers at the village and neighbourhood council levels. Punjab and Sindh opted for a more centrist relationship between provincial and local governments. They abolished mid-level *tehsil* structures and created local government structures at the union council level. More recently, Punjab has decided decentralize and strengthen local government functions. Punjab's *Local Government Act* of 2019 introduces a five-tier government system better suited to needs-based development funding and citizen-state trust, from the grassroots up.¹⁸⁹ However, the Act has experienced setbacks – local government elections have been delayed more than once. The sheer complexity and number

of new structures are a concern, as is the concentration of human rights safeguards and (potentially) inequitable power at the district level. Sindh continues to experience a power imbalance between the federal, provincial and local governments. Sindh's Minister of Information and Local Government has complained of central, rather than provincial, leadership in budgetary decision-making.¹⁹⁰

Balochistan was the province most positively affected by financial devolution after the 18th Amendment. Nevertheless, its troubled social contract still needs to be addressed. There is a sense that, post-devolution, Balochistan does not have the powers it needs to achieve substantial change. With a recent Presidential Ordinance seeking to annex the province's border islands to the federal government control, resentment in Balochistan has grown. So too have concerns about the vulnerability of coastal communities confronted by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.¹⁹¹

The merger of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), now known as the Newly Merged Districts, with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018 poses challenges at many levels. These highlight the need to develop compatibility between systems and processes, both for governance and rule of law mechanisms.¹⁹² Much like Balochistan, the Newly Merged Districts have suffered from terrorism, illegal cross-border trade and delayed land reform. The region is also recovering from mass displacement as a result of security operations to quell militancy. Initial steps by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa include linking the provincial financial management system to the Newly Merged Districts¹⁹³ and incorporating their Levies (security forces) into the provincial police force. It has also acknowledged the need to invest in local human resources by deploying Local Government Ambassadors to raise awareness of the merger process and COVID-19 among communities.

A human rights lens and the rule of law

After its *Universal Periodic Review* in 2012, Pakistan established a National Commission for Human Rights (NHCR). A 2016 report by the European



Union notes that the commission lacks functional and budgetary autonomy,¹⁹⁴ and that both the NHCR and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women lack real enforcement mechanisms. Civil society continues to advocate for the Government to finalize the appointment of a new NHCR chairperson and members.¹⁹⁵ Pakistan's status vis-à-vis the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) remains under review.¹⁹⁶

In 2017, Pakistan's *Universal Periodic Review* highlighted the need to address human rights violations. These include the misuse of the *Blasphemy Law*, violations of women's rights and child rights, attacks targeting minorities and journalists, and forced disappearances. The country's *Blasphemy Law* remains a subject of great controversy, with popular political parties taking a conservative stance on the law and cases governed by it. Between 1927 and 2018, 51 people were murdered in Pakistan before their blasphemy trials ended. A nine-year-old blasphemy case against an economically disenfranchised woman was dismissed by the Supreme Court in 2018 and she was granted asylum abroad. In the same year, the newly-elected Government requested that a Professor of Economics of Pakistani origin, from a minority religious group, join its administration. Nationwide protests prevented his appointment. As recently as May 2020, Pakistan's Cabinet established a National Commission for Minorities (NCM) while refusing to include Ahmadis as members – a move endorsed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony.¹⁹⁷

At the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva in 2020, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights categorically stated that religious minorities in Pakistan continue to face violence, repeated attacks on their places of worship, and that the provisions of the *Blasphemy Law* lead to violence against them.¹⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch reported an increase in the targeted killings of Ahmadis in Pakistan in 2020.¹⁹⁹ A 2019 report by the United Nations Commission on Status of Women identified several areas of concern: blasphemy cases, sectarian violence, targeted attacks on religious minorities and human rights defenders, and the creation of greater 'space' for influence by groups with a fundamentalist Islamist agenda. It also highlighted the grave issue of the

forced conversions of Hindu and Christian girls, as well as increased persecution and terrorist attacks against Shia mosques, Sufi shrines, Ahmadis and Christians.²⁰⁰

Pakistan's ranking on the World Economic Forum's *Gender Gap Index* has worsened over time. As noted above, it ranked 151st of 153 countries on the index in 2020.²⁰¹ This reflects a deterioration in important individual categories, including women's economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.²⁰² While Pakistan has signed and ratified important international human rights treaties – including the *Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women* and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* – violations of women's and children's rights remains widespread. For instance, child and forced marriages are commonplace, despite Article 16 of CEDAW affirming every woman's right to enter into marriage "*only with their free and full consent.*" Similarly, Article 14(1) of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* requires state parties to respect children's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. According to the *White Ribbon Campaign*, 939 cases of gang rape, rape and harassment of women were reported in Pakistan in 2015. The lack of sex-disaggregated data in crime reporting and a general lack of official data on crime, remain significant challenges.²⁰³

Land rights are far from gender equal in Pakistan. A variety of arrangements enable smallholder farmers or landless men and women to work the land of larger landowners – either as sharecroppers, tenants or labourers. The *Muslim Family Law Ordinance* of 1961 accords women the right to inherit property from their fathers or husbands. However, they do not have the right to be direct landholders, or to sell and buy land.

Transgender persons continue to face extreme social prejudice, as discussed in section 5. Deep-seated discrimination perpetuates their extreme economic marginalization and stigmatization. Statistics from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded 479 attacks against transgender persons in the province in 2018.²⁰⁴ It is estimated that 40% of transgender persons have never been to school and just 7% reach high school or college.²⁰⁵ Even then, their chances of securing decent work hinge on



whatever public quotas the state offers them. As recently as 2017, the National Assembly proposed a 3% job quota for transgender persons in public and private sector organizations. The *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill* was passed in 2018, but without the proposed job quota. Instead, it included a more generic clause on transgender persons' right to employment in public and private institutions.²⁰⁶

Pakistan has taken an important step to enable individuals to exercise their rights by drafting regulations and bylaws on its *Civil Registration and Vital Statistics* (CRVS) system. This will help fill gaps in legislation and create interdepartmental coordination mechanisms needed for a functional CRVS system. Thanks to scaled up government service delivery and social mobilization, 784,432 children received birth registration certificates in 2020 (55% of whom are boys and 45% girls) across all of Pakistan's provinces. Some 71% of these children are under 5 years old.

Pakistan ranked 120th of 128 countries on the World Justice Project's *Rule of Law Index 2020*.²⁰⁷ The organization's general population poll for Pakistan in 2017²⁰⁸ indicates an unfavourable state-citizen relationship. Some 16% of households across the board have experienced a crime, over 40% of citizens have been involved in a recent dispute, but only six in every 10 citizens have any legal awareness. Respondents expressed overall dissatisfaction with law enforcement agencies and the judiciary.²⁰⁹ The Government of Pakistan and the Supreme Court are placing increasing emphasis on reforming the criminal justice system. This is a focus of a range of national policy documents, such as the *National Judicial Policy*, the *National Internal Security Policy* and the *National Action Plan*.

Pandemic panic-shifting priorities and the need to refocus


The COVID-19 pandemic 2020 has destabilized government plans, adding economic uncertainty, job losses and a public health crisis to an already challenging situation. A sharp increase in violence against women, particularly domestic and intimate partner violence – both in Pakistan and around the world – is one of the most prominent human rights

challenges linked to the pandemic.²¹⁰ Violence against children and minorities is also on the rise.

Human rights remain vulnerable due to the varied local government system across Pakistan, resources stretched to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the drop in real income post-COVID.²¹¹ The new normal for governance in Pakistan must be defined by human rights and agility, with institutional development at the core of each province's mandate. This will enable systems and processes to address the pressure on limited resources posed by the pandemic. With Pakistan on the Financial Action Task Force's grey list until June 2021²¹², largely due to concerns about terror financing, functional local government mechanisms are vital to monitor and improve socio-economic indicators.

Support will also be required for Pakistani migrants, as economies shrink worldwide and limit their opportunities for overseas employment. Pakistan is a major 'labour sending' country, with some 11.29 million Pakistanis working abroad.²¹³ To protect Pakistani migrant workers, the Government is finalizing a draft *National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis*.²¹⁴

The overall situation remains unpredictable at best, with delays in local government elections, economic instability and tremendous pressure on Pakistan's health care and education systems. Despite the risks, banking and government systems nationwide continue to work as usual. This is important, but it also indicates the urgent need – and current capacity deficits – for technological adaptation and flexible work processes. Provincial indicators differ and, with international aid flowing in, there is a greater need than ever for effective planning and coordination between national and provincial institutions.



Section 9.

Prevention and humanitarian-development-peace collaboration

The role of humanitarian and development assistance in peace and stability

Many dimensions of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus are at play in Pakistan. For 40 years, the country has sheltered refugees fleeing war in Afghanistan. Today, Pakistan hosts some 1.4 million Afghan refugees (Proof of Registration Card holders)²¹⁵ – the largest protracted refugee population in the world. It also hosts approximately 840,000 Afghan Citizenship Card (ACC) holders and 400,000 undocumented Afghan nationals.²¹⁶ Its efforts have been commended globally, hailed by the UN Secretary-General as “*remarkable*” for their “*solidarity and compassion*.”²¹⁷ The war in Afghanistan not only creates refugee responsibilities for Pakistan, but also reverberates on national security. Most notably, militants have operated along the Afghan-Pakistan border, prompting extensive campaigns by Pakistan’s armed forces to stem the tide of militancy in the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The 1.2 million persons displaced by violence in this region were only able to return in 2017 and 2018. The Newly Merged Districts’ rich natural resources have also been historically exploited to the disadvantage of local communities, thereby adding to tensions.

Similarly, insurgent groups in Balochistan are opposing the Federal Government. The province is rich in exhaustible and renewable resources, but its perpetual underdevelopment inspires grievances. Neighbouring countries exploit these tensions. Terrorist attacks also continue to occur in major centres, such as Karachi and Peshawar.

Another key crisis dates to the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, yielding a longstanding dispute over the territory of Kashmir. In 2019, India revoked Article 370 of its Constitution, which guaranteed special rights to Indian Administered Kashmir. Since then, Pakistan has halted diplomatic and economic ties with India.²¹⁸ Growing tensions between India and Pakistan, the two largest economies in South Asia, has had a negative impact on the food supply chain between both countries. For example, Pakistan witnessed major disruptions in the supply of vegetables in the last quarter of 2020. Disruptions were also caused by heavy floods in Sindh and Balochistan, which caused widespread harvest losses. Imports of onions from Iran slowed and supplies severely restricted as Pakistan-India trade through the Wagah border closed. Slow imports from Iran and Afghanistan further negatively affected supplies. Supplies of pulses – a staple food that is largely imported – were delayed by cross-border logistical constraints.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor offers opportunities to increase trade based on complementary advantages and mutual benefits. There are more than 40 commodities, including some food items, identified across the corridor for the promotion of rural businesses by developing entrepreneurship, processing zones, skilled manpower and modern market infrastructure. The creation of agricultural economic zones along CPEC could contribute to food sovereignty, benefits for farmers and rural communities, and smarter food production and yields. These zones could also facilitate the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable soil health, cleaner water, ecological pest management and resilient food systems.

There is a well-recognized link between crisis and poverty. Evidence shows that high rates of poverty – particularly extreme poverty – exacerbate civil unrest and political instability. In turn, crises weaken governance, prevent access to basic services and disrupt economic performance and livelihoods, thus driving up poverty. In 2018, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2417 explicitly affirmed that we cannot eradicate hunger without first establishing peace. In Pakistan, poverty and food insecurity are highest in crisis-affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Their



rates of multidimensional poverty are staggering, as noted above: 73% in the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 71% in Balochistan, compared to the national average of 38.8%. While 26% of households across Pakistan are food insecure, this is true for 35% of households in the Newly Merged Districts and 42% in Balochistan.²¹⁹

Recognizing the links between peace and poverty eradication, humanitarian and development actors are increasingly supporting the Government of Pakistan's stabilization efforts in these regions. They include foreign governments, the UN, international financial institutions, academia and civil society. The *Merged Areas Governance Project* is among the largest initiatives specifically geared towards stabilization and peace-building. It supports the peaceful integration of the Newly Merged Districts into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through the extension of civilian governance institutions and socio-economic development.

Mainstreaming human rights in all aspects of assistance is imperative for strengthening prevention and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Placing people's concerns at the heart of humanitarian action is critical to support principled action, ensure access to assistance and protection *for all*, address violations and enhance accountability.²²⁰ Deteriorating human rights situations may trigger crises, which increase the humanitarian and development needs of affected populations. This calls for a human rights-based approach to humanitarian action, grounded on the active participation of affected populations in preparedness, response and recovery.²²¹ It means empowering people to claim their rights and strengthening the capacities and accountability of duty bearers to meet their legal obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. It also calls for the well-thought-out inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized in protection and assistance. This is essential for reducing discrimination and politicization in crisis response, while enhancing measures to prevent violations.

A human rights-based approach can only act as a bridge across the phases of humanitarian and development programming if it is anchored in robust human rights data collection, monitoring, investigation, analysis and reporting.²²²

Most development and humanitarian programmes seek to promote stabilization indirectly, by improving livelihood opportunities and supporting governments to deliver basic services. Productive livelihoods do play a key role in social stabilization. Limited access to assets and the gradual erosion of livelihoods – compounding people's inability to absorb shocks – are major contributors to instability. Activities that strengthen human capital and economic opportunities for vulnerable groups by enhancing or diversifying their livelihoods may, therefore, contribute to peace-building.

The provision of basic public services also plays an important role in stabilization. As outlined in the 2019 briefing paper, *Triple Nexus: WFP's Contributions to Peace*, services like education and social safety nets can help build state capacity and strengthen social cohesion by reinforcing the state-citizen relationship. In crisis and displacement settings, investing in education is particularly crucial, given the central role it plays in community development and social transformation. Ensuring that there are no 'lost generations' deprived of education is necessary to build long-term peace and stability. Providing basic services in areas hosting displaced populations is also vital for building social cohesion and preventing discord. Under the *Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) Programme* in Pakistan, the UN supports the Government to strengthen WASH, education, health and livelihood services for displaced Afghans and Pakistani host communities. In the last decade, the programme has benefitted 10 million people.

Similarly, the UN's community-based *Social Inclusion and Community Stabilization Programme* is spearheading initiatives in post-crisis areas, focusing on youth, women and marginalized groups. These initiatives include integrated psychosocial support, livelihood skills training and access to justice for systematically vulnerable or marginalized populations. It involves strengthening the capacities of government mechanisms to effectively address specific vulnerabilities and forms of exclusion, such as violence against women and girls, their exclusion from decision-making, and their lack of access to social protection and justice. At the duty bearers' level, these initiatives enhance the inclusivity of government actions and the efficiency of service delivery. At the right holders'



level, they aim to create an enabling environment for the most disadvantaged youths, women, girls and transgender persons to reach out to duty bearers and claim their rights. These initiatives also support communities to become dynamic stakeholders in championing and promoting the rights of the most marginalized.

Opportunities for stabilization and development offered by the Afghan peace process

Ongoing Afghan peace talks and intra-Afghan dialogue come at a time of decreasing political tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both governments have agreed that regional connectivity should be broadened and deepened, with an emphasis on trade, the free movement of people, goods and services, the opening of trade and customs posts, and transport and energy infrastructure. They have stated a shared aim: reaping regional development dividends, greater than any that a single country could achieve alone. Significant security challenges and uncertainty remains about the Afghan peace process, which is marked by limited progress, especially due to disputes over procedural rules. Nevertheless, the peace process offers a historic opportunity to stabilize the region and advance much-needed socio-economic development across the board.

A number of regional cooperation platforms can be leveraged to strengthen regional connectivity between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. These include the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC).

UN Country Teams are mobilizing to identify how the UN system can best support both countries to leverage the opportunities offered by the peace process to accelerate socio-economic gains, particularly benefitting the marginalized. In Pakistan, one focus is on vulnerable communities living along the border with Afghanistan, in the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Their livelihoods depend heavily on cross-border exchange and they have been most affected by the spillover of the Afghan conflict. Border fencing initiated by the Federal Government on the Pakistan-Afghanistan and Pakistan-Iran borders has

disrupted informal cross-border trade, the main source of livelihoods for communities in border areas. This has made these communities increasingly vulnerable, making it all the more urgent to create sustainable livelihood and resilience opportunities for them.

The Afghan peace process also potentially paves the way for the voluntary, safe and dignified repatriation of 1.4 million Afghan refugees, and 1.24 million Afghan Citizen Card holders and undocumented Afghans, from Pakistan. If successful, it promises a conducive environment for their sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan.²²³ This will involve building on ongoing programmes to support opportunities for Afghan youth in Pakistan through education and vocational skills training. This grounding will help them secure jobs or start businesses if they return to Afghanistan. The UN supports border and immigration management to facilitate the legitimate movement of people and goods, while maintaining secure borders – including in the context of complex migration flows between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The inclusion of returning refugees and other groups of Afghans in Pakistan into Afghanistan's development planning and programming must be impactful to enable their sustainable reintegration. This, in turn, will help solidify peace-building, reconciliation and stabilization efforts. Done right, the contribution of returning Afghans – including registered refugees, Afghan Citizen Card holders and undocumented Afghan migrants – will have a transformative impact on Afghanistan's nascent nation-building and reconstruction processes. It will have an equally profound impact on regional stability and economic growth, thereby consolidating the dividends of peace. It will alleviate pressure on countries like Pakistan and Iran that have hosted millions of Afghans for decades, while helping to reduce irregular movement inside and outside the region. By contrast, the cost of inaction or exclusion will be immense. It will be measured by generations still in limbo, increased population flows and deepening socio-economic, peace and security implications in Afghanistan, the sub-region and beyond.



Integrating humanitarian, development and peace efforts

The humanitarian impacts of natural disasters are further compounded by instability in some parts of the country, particularly in Balochistan and border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Despite the devastating impact of natural and manmade disasters, international humanitarian funding for Pakistan has decreased in the past decade, reflecting the country's emerging lower-middle-income status. As discussed in sections 1 and 3, Official Development Assistance to Pakistan fell from US\$2.9 billion in 2016 to US\$1.3 billion in 2018. Over 90% of these funds were earmarked for socio-economic development and just 9% for humanitarian aid.²²⁴

Therefore, it is critical that humanitarian resources are used efficiently, hand-in-hand with development assistance to reduce the risks of future disasters, contribute to stabilization and strengthen the Government's capacity to respond to disasters – particularly through shock-responsive safety nets. Government safety nets play a key role in meeting the needs of communities that are lagging behind. Their development is hindered by a combination of insecurity, chronic economic marginalization, disasters and economic shocks, especially in Balochistan and the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Efficient resource use requires thinking beyond the traditional silos of humanitarian and development mandates. It means focusing on how humanitarian and development actors can support the continuum of assistance between disaster risk reduction, emergency response, safety nets and peace-building. The Government of Pakistan's mammoth response to the COVID-19 pandemic is a prime example of integrating humanitarian and

development efforts. It has paved the way for the rapid expansion of Pakistan's national safety net to the most vulnerable segment of society. The Government's PKR 1.2 trillion fiscal stimulus package to address COVID-19's impact involves expanding the *Ehsaas* emergency programme's outreach from 5.2 million to 12 million households.²²⁵ It also covers cash grants for 3 million daily wage labourers in the informal economy, and the distribution of food items to poor Pakistani families at subsidized rates. Refugees, Afghan Citizen Card holders and undocumented Afghans are not included in these measures. In light of the immense economic fallout and public health impact of COVID-19, there is a need for additional donor support to enable the Government to include refugees and other vulnerable groups in its measures, such as relief packages and vaccination campaigns.

Pakistan has taken promising steps, yet much more needs to be done to expand the social protection system and ensure its sustainability beyond the short-term COVID-19 response.²²⁶ [Annex VII](#) identifies further humanitarian and development risks, their likelihood, impact and mitigation measures.

Annexes

Annex I. Task Force and division of duties for the Common Country Analysis

Members of the CCA Task Force



Division of duties for the Common Country Analysis















	Theme/focus areas	Lead author	Co-authors
1	Country context	UNRCO	
2	Progress on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs	UNICEF	UNESCAP, UNFPA, ILO, FAO, IFAD, WHO and UNESCO
3	The SDGs' financing landscape	UNDP	
4	Leaving no one behind, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment	UNFPA	UN Women, UNESCAP, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, ILO, WHO, UNOPS and UNODC
5	Multidimensional risks	UNODC	UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and FAO
6	Economic transformation	UNIDO	UNESCAP, FAO, ILO and IFAD
7	The environment and climate change	FAO	UNEP, UN Habitat, UNIDO, WHO and UNDP
8	Governance and institutional capacity	UNDP	FAO, ILO, IFAD, WHO, UNOPS and UNODC
9	Prevention and humanitarian-development-peace collaboration	UNHCR	IOM, WFP, WHO and UN Women

Note: The 'Introduction' and 'Methodology' sections of the CCA were also prepared by UNRCO.



Annex II. Key SDG indicators

Rating²²⁷  Major challenges  Significant challenges  Challenges remain  SDG achieved  Information unavailable

Indicator	Value	Year	Rating	Alternative source
SDG 1 – No Poverty				
Multidimensional poverty headcount ratio (% of the total population)	38.8 ²²⁸	2015		
Poverty headcount ratio at US\$1.90 per day (2011 PPP) (% of the population)	4.0 ²²⁹	2015		
Poverty headcount ratio at US\$3.20 per day (2011 PPP) (% of the population)	35.1 ²³⁰	2015		
Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of the population)	24.3 ²³¹	2015		
Proportion of the population using basic drinking water services (%)	91.5 ²³²	2017		
Proportion of population using basic sanitation services (%)	70 ²³³	2018		
SDG 2 – Zero Hunger				
Prevalence of undernourishment (%)	12.3 ²³⁴	2020		
Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population (%)	15.9 ²³⁵	2020		
Prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years of age (%)	40.2 ²³⁶	2018		37.6%, Global Nutrition Report 2020
Prevalence of wasting in children under 5 years of age (%)	17.7 ²³⁷	2018		7.1%, Global Nutrition Report 2020
Prevalence of obesity among children (% of the adult population)	9.5 ²³⁸	2018		2.5%, Global Nutrition Report 2020
Agriculture's share of government expenditure (%)	0.02 ²³⁹	2018		
SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being				
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	186 ²⁴⁰	2018		
Neonatal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	42 ²⁴¹	2018		41%, Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement



				(PSLM) 2018–19
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	62 ²⁴²	2019	●	60%, PSLM 2018–19
Mortality rate, under-5 (per 1,000 live births)	74 ²⁴³	2018	●	67%, PSLM 2018–19
Life expectancy at birth (years)	66.5 ²⁴⁴	2018	●	
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 adolescent females aged 15 to 19)	46 ²⁴⁵	2017	●	
Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	69.3 ²⁴⁶	2018	●	71%, PSLM 2018–19
Traffic deaths (per 100,000 population)	14.3 ²⁴⁷	2016	●	2.96, Statistical Yearbook 2017–18 (computed)
Universal health coverage (UHC) index of service coverage (worst 0–100 best)	45.0 ²⁴⁸	2017	●	
SDG 4 – Quality Education				
Net primary enrolment rate (%)	67.6 ²⁴⁹	2018	●	
Primary completion rate (%)	59.6 ²⁵⁰	2018	●	66%, PSLM 2018–19
Lower secondary completion rate (%)	48.2 ²⁵¹	2018	●	46%, PSLM 2018–19
Literacy rate (% of the population aged 15 to 24)	74.5 ²⁵²	2017	●	72%, PSLM 2018–19
SDG 5 – Gender Equality				
Legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality (% of achievement) including on violence against women (VAW)	75.0 ²⁵³	2018	●	
Demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods (% of females aged 15 to 49 who are married or in unions)	48.5 ²⁵⁴	2018	●	
Ratio of female-to-male mean years of education received (%)	58.5 ²⁵⁵	2018	●	
Proportion of women who make their own informed decisions regarding contraceptive use (% of women aged 15 to 49)	31.4 ²⁵⁶	2018	●	
Ratio of female-to-male labour force participation rate (%)	29.6 ²⁵⁷	2019	●	
Seats held by women in the National Parliament (%)	20.2 ²⁵⁸	2020	●	19.7%, Gender Compendium, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) 2019
Proportion of women in managerial positions (%)	4.93 ²⁵⁹	2018	●	21.7%, Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2017–18
Degree to which the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control	1 ²⁶⁰	2019	●	















SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation				
Proportion of the population practicing open defecation, by urban/rural (%)	10.4 ²⁶¹	2017		
Population using at least basic drinking water services (%)	91.5 ²⁶²	2017		94.6%, PSLM/Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2018–19
Population using at least basic sanitation services (%)	59.9 ²⁶³	2017		70%, PSLM/HIES
Water use efficiency (US\$/m3)	1.46 ²⁶⁴	2017		
Freshwater withdrawal (% of available freshwater resources)	122.7 ²⁶⁵	2017		
SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy				
Proportion of the population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology (%)	20.2 ²⁶⁶	2018		35%, PSLM 2018–19
Population with access to electricity (%)	92.2 ²⁶⁷	2018		91%, PSLM 2018–19
Population with access to clean fuels and technology for cooking (%)	43.3 ²⁶⁸	2016		
CO ₂ emissions from fuel combustion for electricity and heating per total electricity output (metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO ₂)/terawatt hour (TWh))	1.5 ²⁶⁹	2017		
SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth				
Annual growth rate of GDP per capita	3.3 ²⁷⁰	2018		-2.10, Economic Survey 2018–19
Unemployment rate (% of the total labour force)	5.6 ²⁷¹	2017		
Adults with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile money service provider (% of the population aged 15 or over)	18 ²⁷²	2018		
Proportion of informal employment (%)	71.4 ²⁷³	2017		
SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure				
Proportion of the population covered by at least a 4G mobile network (%)	68.6 ²⁷⁴	2018		
Population using the internet (%)	15.5 ²⁷⁵	2017		17%, PSLM 2018–19
Mobile broadband subscriptions (per 100 population)	29.2 ²⁷⁶	2018		
Logistics Performance Index: Quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure (worst 1–5 best)	2.2 ²⁷⁷	2018		
Scientific and technical journal articles (per 1,000 population)	0.1 ²⁷⁸	2018		
Expenditure on research and development (% of GDP)	0.2 ²⁷⁹	2017		



SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities				
Gini coefficient adjusted for top income	43.0 ²⁸⁰	2015		
Labour share of GDP (%)	42.2 ²⁸¹	2017		
SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities				
Proportion of the urban population living in slums (%)	40.1 ²⁸²	2018		38%, World Cities Report 2020
Access to an improved water source, piped (% of urban population)	51.3 ²⁸³	2017		
Satisfaction with public transport (%)	60.2 ²⁸⁴	2018		
SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production				
Fossil fuel pre-tax subsidies (consumption and production) (US\$ billion)	3.2 ²⁸⁵	2017		
Municipal solid waste (kilogrammes per capita per day)	1.1 ²⁸⁶	2017		
Electronic waste (kilogrammes per capita)	1.6 ²⁸⁷	2016		
SDG 13 – Climate Action				
Energy-related CO ₂ emissions (total carbon dioxide content (tCO ₂) per capita)	0.9 ²⁸⁸	2017		
Number of deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters	137 ²⁸⁹	2018		Deaths = 0.06 per 100,000 population, National Disaster Management Authority National Report
SDG 14 – Life Below Water				
Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP	0.2 ²⁹⁰	2017		
Mean area that is protected in marine sites important to biodiversity (%)	39.3 ²⁹¹	2018		
Ocean Health Index: Clean water score (worst 0–100 best)	45.5 ²⁹²	2019		
Fish caught by trawling (%)	23.9 ²⁹³	2014		
Progress by countries in the degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing	3 ²⁹⁴	2018		
Degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries	2 ²⁹⁵	2018		
SDG 15 – Life on Land				



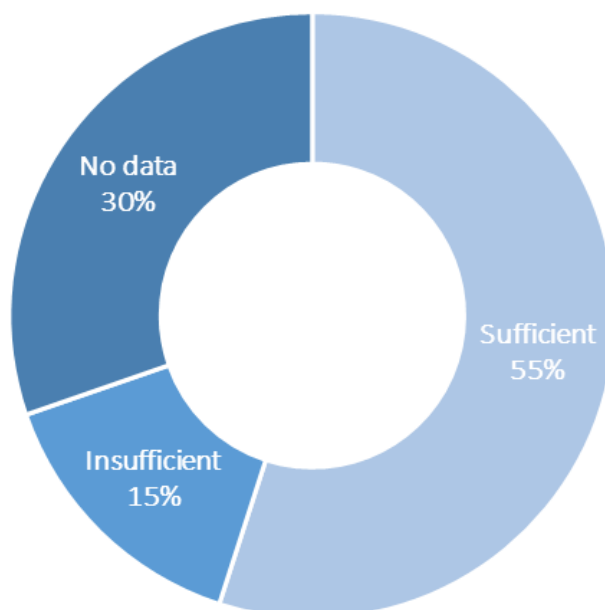
Forest area as a proportion of total land area (%)	4.8 ²⁹⁶	2020		5.1%, Pakistan Economic Survey 2019–20
Mean area that is protected in freshwater sites important to biodiversity (%)	37.0 ²⁹⁷	2018		
Proportion of land that is degraded of total land area (%)	5.0 ²⁹⁸	2015		
Mountain Green Cover Index	60.2 ²⁹⁹	2017		
SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions				
Homicides (per 100,000 population)	4.2 ³⁰⁰	2017		
Property rights (worst 1–7 best)	4.1 ³⁰¹	2019		
Percentage of the population who feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live (%)	68.5 ³⁰²	2018		
Corruption Perception Index (worst 0–100 best)	32 ³⁰³	2019		
Press Freedom Index (best 0–100 worst)	45.8 ³⁰⁴	2019		
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals				
Total Official Development Assistance for technical cooperation (US\$ million)	499.3 ³⁰⁵	2018		
Countries that have at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years	1 ³⁰⁶	2017		
Internet users per 100 inhabitants	15.1 ³⁰⁷	2017		

Sources: Pakistan Labour Force Survey, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey, Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, Pakistan Economic Survey, United Nations Statistics Division and the World Development Indicators. Please refer to the endnotes for the individual sources of each value included in this table.

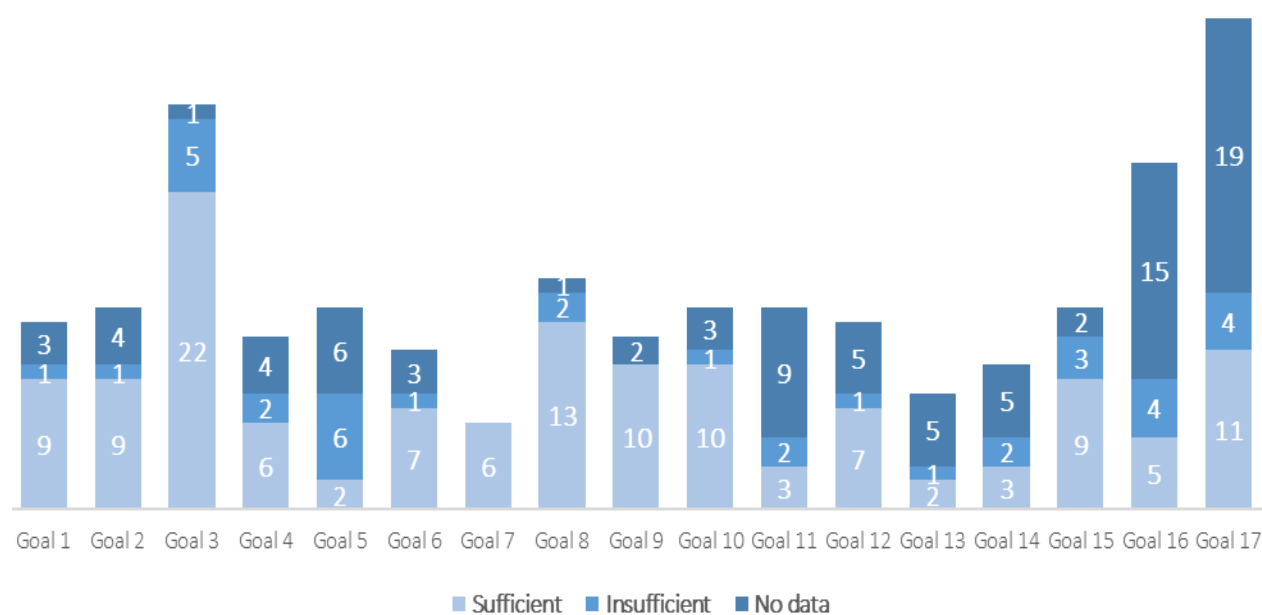


Annex III. Pakistan data availability

Annex III Figure 1. Availability of data on SDG indicators in 2020 (%)



Annex III Figure 2. Data availability on SDG indicators in 2020 (number of indicators per goal)



Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2021). *SDG Data Availability*. Bangkok: UNESCAP. Available at <https://data.unescap.org/data-analysis/sdg-data-availability>

Note:

Sufficient data: Indicators with at least an underlying data series with two data points or more between 2000 and 2019.

Insufficient data: Indicators with an underlying data series with at least one data point but not sufficient for estimating historical trends.



Annex IV. Synopsis of progress by goal

Human rights are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, expressed in its central pledge to ‘leave no one behind’. The 2030 Agenda envisions, proposes action, offers benchmarks and calls for reporting on efforts to ensure universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination. It hinges on respect for all races, sexes, ethnicities and cultural diversity. It champions equal opportunity to unleash human potential and achieve shared prosperity in a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world, in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met. Bearing in mind these aspirations, this annex outlines Pakistan’s progress to date on each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

People

SDG 1 – No Poverty

Pakistan has made significant gains on poverty reduction. According to national estimates, its poverty rate declined from 64.3% in 2001–02 to 24.3% in 2015–16.³⁰⁸ This trend is consistent with the international measure of the proportion of the population living below the global poverty line – of US\$1.9 per day in 2011 – which declined from 8.3% in 2010 to 3.9% in 2015.³⁰⁹ Of the 114 countries assessed by the World Bank, Pakistan is among the top 15 with the greatest annual average percentage point decline in poverty between 2000 and 2015. Despite this, 50 million people still lived below the national poverty line in 2015. Since then, the pace of poverty reduction has slowed. This is partly due to the macroeconomic crisis prompted by structural economic issues and partly due to the inadequate implementation of pro-poor policies.

Different methodologies and the use of monetary poverty lines tied to currency conversion rates with different levels of purchasing power parity, have led to inconsistent measures. For example, although official national estimates show a decline in the poverty headcount between 2010 and 2015, an independent policy think tank estimated that around 38% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2015. In absolute terms, this means an additional 13 million people living in poverty. In 2016, the Government, UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) tailored a global measure of poverty, the *Multidimensional Poverty Index* (MPI) to Pakistan’s context. This index moves beyond assessing poverty based on income alone. Instead, it analyses deprivation across three key dimensions: education, health and living standards. Multidimensional poverty is far higher than income poverty in Pakistan, estimated at 38.8% in 2014–15³¹⁰, albeit with significant regional variations. For instance, multidimensional poverty was the highest in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (73%) and Balochistan (71%), and lowest in Punjab (31%) in 2014–15. Based on 2017–18 estimates, Pakistan’s population remains deprived in at least one of these three dimensions. This marks an improvement from previous years, largely due to progress on sanitation and reducing child mortality. Nevertheless, deprivation caused by a lack of access to electricity has increased.

It is estimated that 40% of all children born in abject poverty will remain in the lowest income quintile, while another 40% will improve their lot slightly – from being ‘very poor’ to ‘poor’. Just 10% will be able to transition out of poverty in their lifetime. Measuring child poverty separately from overall poverty rates is essential. One recent study³¹¹ estimates Punjab’s *Multidimensional Poverty Index* (MPI) value, alongside the province’s child-disaggregated MPI and Child MPI values. As 26% of Punjab’s population were multidimensionally poor in 2017–18, the province’s overall MPI value is 0.124. District values ranged from 0.055 in Gujranwala and 0.056 in Rawalpindi to 0.209 in Bahawalpur and 0.279 in Dera Ghazi Khan. The Child MPI is constructed based on four dimensions: education (years of schooling and child school attendance), health (immunization, antenatal care and assisted delivery), living standards (water, sanitation, walls, overcrowding, electricity, cooking fuel, assets, land and livestock, child nutrition and child labour) and child conditions (cognitive development). Disaggregating Punjab’s MPI value for 2017–18 by age reveals that children are disproportionately and more frequently



affected by multidimensional poverty. While just over one in five adults in Punjab are multidimensionally poor (21.5%), this is true for one in three children (32.2%).

Pakistan has a long history of poverty reduction policies and interventions. Yet persistently high poverty levels reveal that these efforts are not enough, largely because they focus on static initiatives and have limited outreach. Funding is also a major concern. Spending on poverty reduction programmes accounts for just 2% of Pakistan's GDP. Nevertheless, promising developments are afoot. Pakistan is implementing a broad range of social protection programmes to cover vulnerable people, including the elderly, persons with disabilities, children, women and widows, among others. Under the landmark *Ehsaas* ('Compassion') initiative, some 134 fragmented and insufficiently-managed social protection programmes, often prone to political manipulation, have been integrated under a single umbrella. Launched in 2019, *Ehsaas* builds on the framework developed under the *Benazir Income Support Programme* (BISP), one of South Asia's largest cash transfer programmes and Pakistan's flagship social protection initiative. The BISP currently covers 5.7 million ultra-poor families, providing women with unconditional cash transfers. Other initiatives are also being operationalized, such as *Panahgah* (shelter homes) and expanded health insurance coverage through *Sehat Insaf* Cards and *Khidmat* Cards for vulnerable people.

One of the major reasons for persistently high rates of poverty is the absence of an employment-focused national strategy or active labour market policies. Despite Pakistan's large young population, labour market institutions are either weak or non-existent. In addition to a huge number of out-of-school children, skills development and vocational training lags behind in terms of quantity and quality, thereby rendering it unable to meet labour market demands. Innovation, research and development in this sector are lacking. The apprenticeship system is largely obsolete and non-functional. Employment services do not cater to in-country demand; instead, they focus on overseas employment. Moreover, support for entrepreneurship and new startups is limited to sporadic instruments for 'access to finance' without training.

Disparities remain despite government efforts. Bureaucratic and political delays hamper regular updates of the *National Socio-Economic Registry* (NSER). This poses challenges for effective targeting, as the last round of the NSER survey was carried out in 2010–11. In terms of SDG target 1.3.1 – on the proportion of the population covered by social protection systems – Pakistan's baseline in 2015 was 29.9%, against an ambitious target of ensuring that 70%³¹² of Pakistanis are covered by social protection programmes by 2030.³¹³ Other challenges that hamper poverty reduction include high rates of youth unemployment, persistent underfinancing of social infrastructure, vulnerability to natural disasters, a lack of preparedness and a dearth of detailed, disaggregated data on poverty that hampers effective policy analysis and evidence-based decision-making.

To achieve SDG 1, Pakistan requires significant policy support and higher, sustained and more inclusive growth. There is a clear need for balanced development across Pakistan's provinces and regions, as well as greater access to credit to support livelihoods. Achieving Pakistan's target of social protection for at least 70% of the population is imperative. Moreover, the routine measurement of child poverty should be integrated into existing national and provincial surveys to capture specific evidence needed to address child poverty in national and provincial development strategies.

SDG 2 – Zero Hunger

Pakistan has made little progress on SDG 2. Notable recent achievements include a new *Adolescent Nutrition Strategy* that stands to benefit 47 million young people. Over 2.6 million people have benefitted from wheat flour fortification and 600,000 people were reached by awareness raising on wheat fortification. The *Ehsaas Nashonuma* initiative – a 'nutrition conditionality' programme in collaboration with the *Benazir Income Support Programme* – has also been launched to implement a flagship *Stunting Prevention Programme*.

Nevertheless, far more is needed to achieve 'Zero Hunger'. Despite the importance of the agricultural sector, improving productivity, utilization and reducing post-harvest losses remains challenging. Pakistan's highly



diverse climatic conditions and agro ecological zones (AEZ), coupled with large-scale natural disasters in the past 20 years, have immense implications for rural livelihoods, livestock rearing and agriculture. These disasters include the calamitous Kashmir earthquake in 2005, catastrophic floods in 2010 and 2011, and severe prolonged drought between 2013 and 2018. Vulnerability to shocks and disasters increases the risk of food insecurity, particularly given the limited capacities to respond to increasing climate variations and soil degradation. Alongside the effects of climate change, challenges to achieving SDG 2 include Pakistan's high population growth rate, widespread multidimensional poverty and a weak policy and business environment.

Poor governance of land and water tenure is an unresolved structural issue. Reliable access to arable land and water are fundamental to both food security and a viable agriculture sector based on sustainable, climate-resilient, cost-competitive practices. A lack of modernization in agricultural production techniques in Pakistan, decreasing landholdings among smallholders and the excessive fragmentation of agricultural land are major challenges. Overhauling the complex and sensitive land tenure governance system, alongside water allocation and distribution practices, are paramount for alleviating food insecurity, malnutrition and rural poverty. In Sindh, for instance, the position of so-called sharecroppers or *hari* farmers, who are usually landless, is particularly problematic in relation to their landlords (*zamindar*), intermediaries (*arthi*) and land registration bureaucrats (*tapedar*). The issue of bonded agricultural labour, particularly prevalent in rural Sindh, is a source of widespread inequality, intergenerational poverty and chronic food insecurity.

Minimum dietary diversity, minimum meal frequency and minimum acceptable diets are below adequate levels in Pakistan. The affordability of nutritious diets is a major concern. Affordability remains elusive given the prevalence of low wages, large families and low levels of farming diversification. A lack of diversification limits dietary diversity for subsistence farmers who concentrate on cash crops or products like wheat or milk. While unbalanced and unhealthy diets are an obstacle to achieving SDG 2 across the board, it is particularly problematic that mothers' and young children's poor nutritional status is not being improved at the rate needed to achieve SDG 2 by 2030.

The percentage of stunted children declined from 45% in 2012–13 to 40.2% in 2017–18³¹⁴, while the proportion of underweight children under the age of five fell from 30% to 23%.³¹⁵ Of these 23%, 8% are severely underweight. The proportion of underweight children is greater in rural areas (25%) than urban centres (19%).³¹⁶ One in eight adolescent girls and one in five adolescent boys is underweight. Moreover, 56.6% of adolescent girls in Pakistan are anaemic. According to the *National Nutrition Survey 2018*, 17.7% of children under the age of five suffer from wasting and 9.5% are obese. Nearly half of Pakistan's children are deficient in critical vitamins and minerals.³¹⁷ Some 12.3% of Pakistan's population are undernourished, with an estimated 26 million people suffering from undernourishment or food insecurity, according to the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*. Other estimates put this number even higher. For instance, recent estimates by the World Food Programme suggest that as many 20%–30% of the population (40 to 62 million people) are affected by some form of food insecurity.³¹⁸ Factors that contribute to poor nutritional indicators include inadequate systems for monitoring and evaluation, difficulties in tracking public expenditure on nutrition through financial reporting systems and delays in the implementation of provincial multisectoral nutrition strategies. In addition to addressing these factors, there is a clear need to scale up or redesign nutrition interventions.

SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being

Pakistan has made considerable progress on immunization. Two-thirds of children between 12 and 23 months old now receive all eight of their basic vaccinations.³¹⁹ Yet there remains a long way to go to reach the global immunization target and address issues of supply and demand. Despite progress on combatting polio by 2017, the disease remained endemic in Pakistan in 2019–2020. It is one of only two countries in the world where wild poliovirus continues to circulate and new cases are reported. Pakistan faces the dual challenge of eradicating wild poliovirus and managing a circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus outbreak, fuelled by immunity gaps among children under-five, especially in underserved areas.



Child survival has improved in Pakistan. The neonatal mortality rate (NMR) fell to 42 deaths for every 1,000 live births, the infant mortality rate (IMR) to 62 deaths per 1,000 live births, and the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) to 74 deaths per 1,000 live births.³²⁰ Still, one in every 14 Pakistani children does not survive to his or her fifth birthday.

Improvements are also evident in maternal health. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) fell to 186 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births.³²¹ Other key indicators improved, including the provision of antenatal care by skilled providers and skilled birth attendance.³²² While women's health and reproductive outcomes have improved substantially and gender gaps in health care have narrowed, disparities persist in access to services for women and girls. Inequity across geographic (urban-rural) locations and wealth quintiles, coupled with poor quality care in the perinatal period, contributes to high rates of stillbirth, neonatal deaths and maternal deaths. About two-thirds of women (67%) report facing at least one problem when trying to access health care. More than half (58%) are reluctant to seek health care alone, given social norms that expect men to escort women in public. For 42% of women, distances to health facilities are problematic. Some 30% struggle to pay for treatment when men are the decision-makers in their households and control family funds. Another 21% find it difficult to secure permission to access health services. Challenges are especially pronounced for women in rural areas and from the poorest wealth quintile, 75% and 80% of whom, respectively, report facing at least one obstacle to accessing health care, compared to 53% of women in urban centres and 48% of those in the richest quintile.³²³

Although the fertility rate has decreased slightly – from 3.8% in 2012–13 to 3.6% in 2017–18 – Pakistan's contraceptive prevalence rate in 2018 remained stagnant at 34.2%. Moreover, non-communicable diseases remain a major concern, including diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases and cancer.

Despite these challenges, public sector expenditure on health and nutrition only amounts to 1.1% of Pakistan's GDP.³²⁴ The Government has expressed its commitment to increasing health spending to fight diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, cancer and heart disease. In 2019, cumulative health expenditures by federal and provincial governments grew by 1.3%, rising from PKR 416.5 billion in 2018 to PKR 421.8 billion. Far more spending is needed to achieve SDG 3.

Other factors that contribute to the country's poor health outcomes include a fragile health system, diverse but inadequate preventive care and patient counselling in the health delivery system and weak links between education and health. Challenges are compounded by the limited availability of skilled health professionals, insufficient capacity to train the number of health workers required to meet the population's needs and deteriorating public health infrastructure. Pakistan is currently striving to increase its critical health workforce from 1.45 to 4.45 health workers per 1,000 persons.

The Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination led the process of localizing SDG 3 targets and indicators, which were endorsed in 2019. Based on the approved localized targets and indicators, a web-based monitoring and reporting system was developed in 2020. The system features the most up-to-date data available for each SDG 3 target and indicator, including data sources. It also displays progress and disaggregated trend analysis. The *Universal Health Coverage Index* (a list of proxy indicators) will be measured through the system at the district level. This SDG 3 monitoring and reporting system is aligned with the other SDG dashboards led by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination. The ministry is currently improving and aligning the *National Health Information and Management System* with health-related SDGs to address health-related data gaps.

SDG 4 – Quality Education

Article 25A of Pakistan's Constitution affirms the right to education and the state's obligation to provide free and compulsory education for all children between 5 and 16 years old. In 2010, the 18th Constitutional Amendment devolved responsibility for education to provincial governments. It sought to enhance their



autonomy to plan and manage resources in line with their specific provincial contexts – in terms of policies, curricula, the syllabus and excellence. Overall education planning, policy and standards beyond Grade 12 remain covered by the Federal Legislative List. Despite devolution, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training is taking the lead in formulating a national framework for policy planning and curriculum development that can be contextualized by the provinces. There is some contradiction between policy and implementation, as a federal ministry outlines a national curriculum, while curriculum development is a provincial mandate.

Access, equity and quality are the three major issues facing Pakistan's education sector. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan was not on track to meet SDG 4 targets. The pandemic has further disrupted progress. According to the *Pakistan National Education Response and Resilience Plan (K-12) for COVID 19* the closure of educational institutions due to the pandemic has directly impacted 40 million learners from pre-primary to the higher secondary levels. This will magnify the risks and vulnerabilities of an already weak education system, with threats from both endogenous and exogenous factors.

Pakistan's literacy rate (59%) lags behind that of neighbouring countries. The primary school dropout rate is 22.7%, the third-highest in the region, after Bangladesh and Nepal. Primary education enrolment is increasing, but access constraints abound. Learning assessments point to regional disparity in literacy and numeracy skills among primary school students. Pakistan also has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children – an estimated 22.8 million children between 5 and 16 years old. Only 61% of children of or over the age of 10 had ever attended school in 2018–19, a modest increase from 60% in 2013–14.

Pre-primary education in Pakistan largely consists of *katchi* classes which do not necessarily deliver quality early childhood education (ECE). While many children are enrolled in pre-primary classes, few schools offer dedicated ECE programmes. Most of these children do not have specific resources allocated to them – such as teachers, rooms or supplies. While *katchi* classes remain an informal space, in practice they serve as an entry point for public sector primary schools. Pakistan lacks reliable data on ECE, although estimates suggest that pre-primary or *katchi* enrolment levels increased by 8% for boys and 7% for girls in 2016–17 compared to 2015–16. Overall, 9.78 million children in Pakistan are enrolled in pre-primary education, 46% of whom are girls³²⁵, up from 8.7 million in 2015. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the pre-primary level increased to 84%, significantly higher than 74% in 2015–16. However, the *Gender Parity Index* (GPI) at the pre-primary level is 0.87, as girls' gross enrolment ratio is just 78%, compared to 89% for boys.

Trends in Punjab reveal that pre-primary school attendance is declining. While 34.4% of children under-five attended pre-primary classes in 2018, this was true for 37.3% in 2014.³²⁶ Data from Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa³²⁷ presents a grim picture of ECE, where only 14.2% and 8.1%, respectively, of children under the age of five attend pre-primary education. Disparities between urban and rural locations, and between boys and girls, do not appear marked in pre-primary attendance. However, considerable differences are evident across income quintiles. Only 20.9% of children from Punjab's poorest households attend any form of pre-primary education, compared to 45.4% of children from its richest households.³²⁸ This rises to 63% for 5-year-olds at the beginning of the school year. As ECE is one of the focus areas of the *Punjab School Education Sector Plan 2013–2018*, the province took a key step by issuing a specific *ECE Policy*. Sindh launched its *Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy* in 2015, followed by the development of an *ECCE Curriculum* in 2017 and *ECCE Standards* in 2019.

Overall, Pakistan has made steady, but slow, progress on the *Gender Parity Index*. There remains a wide gap between boys and girls in educational attainment, especially beyond the primary school level. The *Gender Parity Index* value for primary education is 0.92³²⁹, but declines to 0.89 at the middle and secondary school levels. Gender disparities abound in enrolment, with more girls out of school (12.16 million, or 53%) than boys (10.68 million, or 47%) from the primary to the higher secondary levels. Among respondents of the *Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–18*, 20% of men reported attaining a secondary education compared to only 12% of women. Similarly, 19% of men have a higher education degree, compared to 13% of women.³³⁰ According to data from Punjab's *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (MICS), girls from its poorest households are at a particular disadvantage, with a net attendance rate (NAR) of just 10.2% and 5.5% at the lower and upper



secondary levels, respectively. Girls are more likely than boys to drop out of education nationwide. While 21.8% of girls in Class 6 drop out of school, this is true for 18.4% of boys. Inter-district disparities have negative implications for all girls across Pakistan's provinces, as their net attendance ratio falls below 10% to 5% in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and the southern districts of Punjab.

Challenges to achieving SDG 4 include inadequate infrastructure – such as electricity, supplies, access to computers, and clean water and sanitation facilities – a shortage of qualified teachers, high classroom density, long distances to schools and a lack of disability-friendly facilities and learning materials for children with special needs. While education is free in public schools nationwide, the associated cost of education – especially school uniforms, notebooks and stationary – make education expensive for children from poor families, especially girls in rural areas. Overall, Pakistan faces major challenges across all four of SDG 4's indicators. With a 'business as usual' approach, none of the goal's targets will be achieved by 2030. There is a need to declare an 'education emergency' in Pakistan to fast track action on SDG 4.

Pakistan's technical education and vocational training (TVET) system faces qualitative and quantitative challenges. It does not meet labour market demands in terms of quality, nor does it cater to the growing number of young women and men in the country. Out of a total of 3,740 TVET institutions in Pakistan, 2,100 are operated by private sector. The system offers 437,000 seats for TVET students.

SDG 5 – Gender Equality

Pakistan acknowledges that addressing gender disparities is vital for achieving *all* 17 SDGs. The twin-track approach of *gender* not only highlights gender equality under SDG 5 but also recognizes its importance in contributing to progress across all the other goals. Although change has been slow in some areas, other areas have seen positive results. For instance, substantial recent progress has been made on women's leadership and political participation. Progressive gender-responsive legislation has been passed and workplace policies introduced to encourage more women to enter the labour market. The enactment of the *Sindh Home-Based Workers Act* of 2018 and the *Punjab Domestic Workers Act* of 2019 are major landmarks that seek to address the needs of women working in the informal sector. However, one of the main barriers to women's and men's equal participation in the labour force is the unequal distribution of unpaid care work. The burden of caring for children, the elderly and other family members falls squarely on women. A lack of child care support mechanisms in workplaces does not encourage educated women to pursue careers, leaving a significant font of skills and knowledge untapped. To accelerate progress on gender equality, Punjab launched a *Gender Management Information System*, while Sindh developed a *Gender Reforms Action Plan* (GRAP). Pakistan's national development framework, *Vision 2025*, aims to raise women's labour force participation to 45%. To this end, the Government launched the 'one woman, one bank account' plan, whereby 5.7 million women will be able to open savings accounts.³³¹ A *Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy* (2019–2023) has also been approved.

Gender disparities are evident across key indicators – poverty, health, maternal mortality, education, employment, access to resources and decision-making within households and communities – clearly demonstrating that gender is a cross-cutting concern. Pakistan had a *Gender Inequality Index* value of just 0.541 in 2018 and ranked 151st of 153 countries on the *Global Gender Gap Index 2020*.³³² Cultural norms perpetuate women's marginalization, restricting their access to and control over resources, including health care resources. As noted above under SDG 3, women are disadvantaged in decision-making, even about their own health. As a result, women in Pakistan tend to have poor health outcomes. Gender inequalities in the allocation of resources – alongside income, education, health care, nutrition and a political voice – are the key factors associated with women's poor health and well-being worldwide. According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation which analyses data on 'years of life lost' (YLL), maternal deaths, neonatal deaths and diseases caused by poor nutrition topped the list of causes for premature deaths in 2017.³³³ In the same year, dietary iron deficiency was among the top-five leading causes of disability adjusted life years (DALYs) among women of reproductive age.³³⁴



In 2017, the *Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey* revealed that 29% of women aged 15 to 49 were married by the time they were 18, while 21% of women between 20 and 24 years old were married (an estimated 1,909,000 women) before their 18th birthday. While early marriages are declining (falling from a rate of 35% in 2015), in absolute terms the number of girls married before the age of 18 is very high. Sindh is the only Pakistani province that has established 18 as the minimum age of marriage for women; the rest permit girls to marry before turning 18. This poses challenges for achieving SDG 5.3, ‘*eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage*’. Some 34% of women and girls who are, or ever have been, married have experienced spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence in Pakistan.³³⁵ While violence against women and girls remains extremely widespread, the implementation of the *Acid Crime (Amended) Law* and efforts to monitor acid attacks have halved the incidence of acid crimes in Pakistan.³³⁶

A lack of gender-disaggregated data presents a key challenge for planning, monitoring and evaluation in Pakistan. There is a need to strengthen the collection of gender-disaggregated data to identify gaps and challenges on violence against women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, as well as unpaid domestic work and gender inclusiveness in decision-making and leadership, among other issues.

Prosperity

SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy

Pakistan’s progress on SDG 7 is considered slow. Just over 90% of the population had access to electricity in 2018. Access rates in parts of the country remain alarmingly low; for instance, almost half of Sindh’s population lives off-grid.³³⁷ Only 20% people in Pakistan rely primarily on clean fuels and technologies.

The country’s dependence on thermal sources – such as imported coal, local coal, regasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) and natural gas – has been decreasing in recent years. Reliance on natural gas in the overall energy mix is declining, ostensibly because of reduced natural gas reserves and the introduction of liquefied natural gas (LNG) since 2015. The Government is committed to diversifying energy sources by widening renewable energy options – including solar, wind, hydropower and waste-to-energy conversion, among others. It has also expressed its commitment to augmenting installed capacity, increasing access for all and fostering an enabling environment to attract private sector investment.

Pakistan has tremendous potential to generate solar and wind power. According to the World Bank, utilizing just 0.071% of the country’s area for solar photovoltaic (PV) power generation would meet Pakistan’s current electricity demand. Wind is also an abundant resource. Pakistan has several well-known wind corridors and average wind speeds of 7.87 metres per second in 10% of its windiest areas. Despite a number of successful projects, the installed capacity of solar and wind energy in Pakistan, at just over 1,500 Megawatts, represents a mere 4% of total capacity. This is equivalent to 2% of total power generation.

A lack of affordability, technologies and funds reduces access to renewable energy services. Although the private sector has played a role in improving access to modern energy in many places, very little progress has been made to secure the affordable energy needed to power sustained growth. Challenges that Pakistan has yet to resolve include expanding its electricity supply at a faster rate to meet existing unmet demands – in industry, commerce and among households – alongside future demand.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

Pakistan has reported some progress on SDG 8. From 2014–15 to 2018–19, real GDP growth was 4.7%, compared to 5.8% in 2018–19.³³⁸ According to the World Bank, real GDP growth declined from 5.5% in FY18 to 1.9% in FY19 and -1.5% in FY20. Given the uncertainty in the global economy following the COVID-19 pandemic,



sustaining an upward growth trajectory will be challenging for Pakistan. Building a more diverse and competitive economy, capable of leveraging emerging regional trade opportunities, is the best route for broadening growth and mobilizing revenue in the medium- to long-term. In recent years, making regulatory processes simpler and more transparent, while seeking to eliminate obsolete laws and regulations, has helped to improve Pakistan's ranking on the *Ease of Doing Business Index* (EoDB).

Employment rates appear to have improved. Nevertheless, the supply of labour – gauged by the labour force participation rate of the population aged 10 and over – has remained stagnant at 45%–46% in the past decade. Participation rates in 2017–18 were highest in Punjab (47.9%), followed by Sindh (42.3%).³³⁹ Gender inequality is an issue both in terms of employment rates, as well as income. Overall, informal employment declined from 69.9% in 2006–07 to 70.7% in 2017–18. While men's share of informal employment ranged between 71.6% and 71.5% in this period, women's informal employment experienced marginal variations, ranging from 69.9% to 70.7%. The fact that informal workers are excluded from the protection of labour laws and other benefits – such as the minimum wage – is a huge concern. The extension of social protection to the informal economy remains a challenge that requires attention. Significant affirmative action is required to advance non-discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining. According to the ILO's *Global Wage Report 2020–21* around 18% of countries with statutory minimum wages, including Pakistan, exclude agricultural workers, domestic workers or both categories from minimum wage regulations. If minimum wages are to be effective, they need to protect most vulnerable workers and be accompanied by measures to encourage formalization. In addition, Pakistan has yet to ratify ILO Convention No. 183 on maternity protection and has not fully mainstreamed its provisions in legislation to address related challenges.

The *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* adopted by Pakistan and 152 other governments in 2018 is rooted in the 2030 Agenda and recognizes the importance of decent work for all men and women migrant workers. Most internal migration from Pakistan is in search of decent work. A lack of decent work opportunities has far-reaching implications for poverty reduction, stability, security and may even lead to irregular migration. For Pakistan, priority areas for well-governed labour migration include the reintegration of returned migrant workers, skills development and the recognition of qualifications, fair recruitment, diversifying and identifying new labour markets and strengthening bilateral and regional agreements to ensure that migrant workers continue to be protected. To provide meaningful employment and training opportunities, several entrepreneurial initiatives target young people, women and persons with disabilities. These include the *Kamyab Jawan* programme, among others.

A complete assessment of work that needs to be abolished is constrained by a lack of data on child labour in Pakistan, specifically on children between 5 and 14 years old. Current Labour Force Survey statistics only capture the labour market participation of persons of or over the age of 10, which have experienced a declining trend. Similarly, very limited data are available on forced labour. Available estimates reveal that child labour remains pervasive nationwide, as many young children work in family establishments or non-hazardous occupations. This is despite the fact that Article 25A of the Constitution obliges the state to provide free and compulsory quality education to children between 5 and 16 years old, as noted above. According to the latest *Labour Force Survey*, 8.23% of children between 10 and 14 years old are engaged in work, reflecting a downward trend.³⁴⁰ More boys (9.82%) than girls (6.4%) in this age group are involved in child labour. Rates rise manifold for 15- to 19-year-olds, whose labour force participation rate was 32.57% in 2018. Provincial analysis reveals that Punjab has the highest proportion of child labourers between 10 and 14 years old (10.32%), followed by Sindh (7.16%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (4.57%) and Balochistan (4.33%).³⁴¹ Thus, Pakistan is off-track on SDG 8.7, '*eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour*'. It will be vital to develop evidence-based policies to eliminate child labour, based on data from Pakistan's ongoing *Child Labour Survey* – the first such survey in decades.

In order to improve the implementation of labour legislation, all four Provincial Tripartite Consultative Committees (PTCCs) have developed *Labour Protection Frameworks* covering six key areas. These are child labour, forced labour, non-discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining, occupational safety



and health, labour inspection and social dialogue. These areas are covered from three perspectives: legislation, institutional structures and resource allocations.

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Upgrading road networks and energy infrastructure are priorities for Pakistan, as is digitization, especially in terms of expanding broadband and 4G connectivity. In 2017, 68.6% of the population was covered by a mobile (4G) network.³⁴² Pakistanis with mobile phones often regularly use mobile money. While mobile cellular penetration is relatively widespread, internet access is highly limited, although it is on the rise. According to government data, just 15.1% of households in the country have an internet connection³⁴³, or 17% according to World Bank estimates.³⁴⁴

The manufacturing sector employs 16.1% of Pakistan's labour force and accounts for 13–14% of GDP.³⁴⁵ The country has the 22nd longest road network in the world, stretching some 263,775 kilometres. In 2019, the Government approved the country's first *National Transport Policy*, which is now being implemented. To facilitate the safe, efficient movement of goods and passengers, the National Highways Authorities is expanding connectivity between the Khunjab Pass and the port of Gwadar as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor initiative.

Pakistan's vibrant cultural and creative industries have the potential to contribute to economic growth. These include film, music, the visual and performing art, media art, graphic and fashion design, publishing and digital culture, among other industries. According to UNESCO, the country's creative economy grew by 700% between 2004 and 2014 without state support. A lack of data on the creative and cultural industries is a major hurdle for businesses' decision-making and government policy-making. With effective data collection and policies, the creative economy has the potential to expand exponentially.³⁴⁶

Despite progress in advancing sustainable and resilient infrastructure, significant challenges remain. Chief among them is the limited availability and access to sustainable public services in rapidly growing urban centres and remote rural areas. Other concerns include acute supply side constraints – such as intermittent energy supplies – that adversely impact the industrial and manufacturing sectors, alongside a lack of domestic and foreign investment in industrial development. The level of foreign direct investment remains relatively low compared to the country's needs. Progress on SDG 9 is also held back by a lack of skilled labour and comparatively high costs for operations, including water, energy and land prices. High external debt burdens further hamper investment in infrastructure.

SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

Recognizing the importance of SDG 10 as a cross-cutting goal, Pakistan has made some headway on its peace-building and state-building targets. Despite gains, the country faces political, financial and security-related stresses. There is a growing consensus that economic growth alone is not enough to reduce poverty. To do so, we need *inclusive* growth that furthers all three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

SDG 10 is one of the goals that the country does not have sufficient data on for effective monitoring. Income inequality, measured by the Gini index, was 33.5 in 2015, with a growing income gap between urban and rural communities.³⁴⁷ The annualized growth rate experienced by the poorest 40% of the population was 4.3% from 2012–17. This implies that inequality widened even as incomes rose.³⁴⁸

Government efforts to redistribute wealth are important because they help to offset the impact of income inequality. Major interventions in Pakistan include increasing expenditure on the provision of social services and expanding social protection coverage through the *Ehsaas* programme, the *Benazir Income Support Programme*,



the *Kamyab Jawan* programme that provides low-cost loans for young entrepreneurs, the health-focused *Sehat Sahulat* programme and the *Waseela-e-Taleem* programme that supports primary education. The *National Socio-economic Registry* (NSR) is also being updated to target the poorest people in the country more effectively to ensure that no one is left behind. However, as noted above, a lack of regular NSER updates prevents efficient targeting.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

Pakistan is the most urbanized nation in South Asia, as 36.4% of its people live in urban areas.³⁴⁹ The urban population almost doubled from 43 million to 75 million between 1998 and 2017. Approximately 40% of urban residents live in nine major cities, each with populations of over 1 million. More than 40% of residents in major cities live in slums and squatter settlements (*katchi abadis*) due to housing deficits. Their numbers swelled from 4.3 million in 1998 to 9 million in 2015 as the gap between housing supply and demand widened.³⁵⁰ Urbanization is driven by rising rural-urban migration, itself prompted because a large proportion of the population is of working age.

Pakistan's cities, particularly its large cities, are characterized by enormous urban sprawl, placing excessive pressure on existing urban infrastructure and services. Rapid urbanization also erodes liveability, makes urban productivity inefficient, degrades urban ecology, encroaches on heritage sites and hampers urban mobility. Air pollution is worsening in Pakistan's cities due to increasing environmental degradation, inefficient energy use, more vehicles on roads, expanding industrial activity without adequate air emissions' treatment or control and the open burning of solid waste, including plastics. Pakistan's transport sector produces carbon dioxide emissions that are more than twice the regional average.³⁵¹ Climate change has increased the frequency of urban flooding and severe heat waves, which affect human health by prompting widespread vectorborne, waterborne and airborne diseases.

However, there is an opportunity for Pakistan to reap the benefits of its large urban centres. Human settlements are being developed to serve as engines of economic growth and social development. Various government initiatives – such as the *Nay Pakistan Housing Programme*, which aims to build 5 million houses in 5 years – are in tune with SDG 11. They promote inclusive, sustainable urbanization while developing capacities for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management.

Pakistan is richly endowed with thousands of historical and cultural sites, including six sites inscribed on UNESCO's *World Heritage List* and 26 sites on UNESCO's *Tentative List of World Heritage*. Pakistan's cultural heritage can make important contributions to sustainable development and possesses great potential for cultural tourism. Yet safeguarding cultural heritage receives insufficient attention. Culture is not specifically recognized as a priority area in major national development frameworks and has not been officially recognized as an enabler of sustainable development by the country. Similar challenges face Pakistan's intangible cultural heritage – including social practices, dance, music, storytelling, indigenous knowledge, crafts, traditions, and oral traditions and expressions. Intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity. Understanding the intangible cultural heritage of different communities enables intercultural dialogue, social cohesion, intercultural understanding and mutual respect for other ways of life.

SDG target 11.4 focuses on safeguarding cultural and natural heritage. To measure progress on this target, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) will elaborate and report on the globally agreed indicator 11.4.1. Beyond SDG 11.4, culture contributes to development both as a sector of activity and transversally across other sectors and SDG targets. These include SDG targets 2.4 on sustainable food ways and agriculture, 4.7 on skills for sustainable development, 8.3 on jobs, entrepreneurship and innovation, 8.9 on policies for sustainable tourism, 11.7 on inclusive public spaces, 12.b on sustainable tourism management, 13.1 on climate and disaster resilience and 16.4 on the recovery of stolen assets.

SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation

Pakistan has yet to achieve universal and equitable access to affordable drinking water, especially in rural and urban informal settlements and slums. Nevertheless, it has made considerable progress on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) indicators, including the availability, accessibility and quality of drinking water and the use of basic sanitation facilities. As of 2019, 92% of Pakistan's population have access to at least basic drinking water and 60% to basic sanitation facilities.³⁵² Yet an estimated 70% of households still drink bacterially contaminated water. The use of better quality water has declined marginally in urban settings nationwide. The WHO-UNICEF *Joint Monitoring Programme* (JMP) found that 97.12% of households in Punjab had access to basic drinking water in 2019, considerably more so in rural areas (97%) than in urban centres (89%). A number of densely populated cities – including Faisalabad, Multan and Bahawalpur – are struggling with decent water facilities. By contrast, rural communities have access to water hand pumps at the household level. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, the availability of uninterrupted water supplies is higher in rural areas (92%) than in urban settings (78%).³⁵³ Tube wells and boreholes remain the most common sources of drinking water in Pakistan (55%), followed by piped water (24%). The former is the most common source of water in both urban (37%) and rural areas (65%). The vast majority (87%) of households that use piped water, or water from a tube well or borehole, report that water is available without interruption for at least one day.

Unlike water, basic sanitation facilities are far less common in rural areas than in urban centres. Open defecation remains fairly widespread – practiced by an estimated 20 million people – particularly in poor rural communities. Open defecation is problematic as it spreads disease and exposes women, girls and boys to the risk of violence. A lack of access to proper sanitation facilities has a particularly negative impact on the health and well-being of children, especially girls. A considerable proportion of the population (69%) practices handwashing with soap and water at least five times a day. Some 74% of households have a fixed place for handwashing, while 19% have mobile handwashing spaces. One in 10 households does not have water, soap, or any other cleaning agents in place for handwashing.³⁵⁴

Pakistan is committed to achieving localized targets on safe drinking water and sanitation by 2030. All of its provinces have committed to making Pakistan 'open defecation free' by 2025. In 2018, Pakistan's *National Water Policy* was approved after years in the making. Anchored in the paradigm of integrated water resource management, the policy outlines a framework for interventions by federal and provincial governments to address the root causes of the declining supply and deteriorating quality of water. Regional developments include the introduction of the *Punjab Water Act of 2019*. Under this act, the provincial government has formed a commission responsible for conserving, redistributing and augmenting water resources. Since 2011, all four provinces have approved drinking water policies that have been recently updated and re-approved to incorporate SDG commitments. For example, Sindh approved both its drinking water policy and its sanitation policy in 2019. Provincial sectoral plans have also been developed: the *Punjab WASH Sector Plan 2014–2024*, the *Balochistan WASH Sector Plan 2015–2025*, *Sindh WASH Sector Plan 2016–2026* and the *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa WASH Sector Plan*, launched in 2018.

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

Trends in Pakistan are mixed on SDG 12. Monitoring the goal is difficult due to extremely limited data collection. For instance, no quantitative information is available on fish waste. Other challenges to achieving SDG 12 include a lack of policy guidelines to manage growing electronic waste, limited intersectoral collaboration and inadequate private sector engagement. As waste is not sorted 'at source', high levels of contaminated waste and materials pose critical challenges.



Pakistan generates about 20 million tonnes of solid waste every year, with waste generation growing at a rate of 2.4% annually.³⁵⁵ The Government of Pakistan estimates that 71,000 tonnes of solid waste is generated per day, largely in major metropolitan areas. Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, generates more than 9,000 tonnes of municipal waste daily. Solid waste generation in Pakistan ranges between 0.283 to 0.612 kilogrammes per capita per day. About 60%–70% of solid waste in Pakistani cities is collected. The waste collection fleet typically comprises handcarts and carts pulled by donkeys for primary collection. Secondary collection and transport involves open trucks, tractors or trolley systems, and arm roll containers or trucks. Most waste is disposed of in open dumps and through open burning. The environmental impact of such waste management practices is pronounced: they produce greenhouse gas emissions, pollute water and contaminate soil and water bodies. Hazardous waste – including waste from industries and hospitals – poses a major threat to the health of humans and ecosystems alike.

Pakistan supports the *10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production* (10YFP), a global commitment to accelerate the shift towards sustainable patterns of consumption and production. The country is particularly active in 10YFP programme areas such as sustainable buildings and construction, sustainable tourism, sustainable food systems, consumer information and sustainable lifestyles.

SDG 13 – Climate Action

Pakistan has technically achieved the climate action goal, as its energy-related emissions are below 2 tonnes per capita. Pakistan will be the global host of World Environment Day 2021 (5 June), which will mark the launch of the UN's Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. This offers an opportunity for Pakistan to address environmental challenges, ecosystem production, sustainable consumption and production, and natural resource management, including in the highly stressed water sector. Despite progress in some areas, negative developments are afoot in others. Concerted efforts between 2013 and 2018 improved the country's environmental and climate governance structures. However, global warming poses more complex, severe threats to Pakistan's climate stability than that of many other countries. According to the *Global Climate Risk Index 2020*, Pakistan witnessed 152 extreme weather events between 1999 and 2018, causing a loss of 0.53% per unit GDP and economic losses of US\$3.8 billion.³⁵⁶ Studies project that temperatures will rise by 1.31°C in the 2020s in Pakistan, by 2.54°C in the 2050s and by 4.38°C in the 2080s.

Pakistan's energy sector is the greatest contributor to the country's greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 51% of total emissions. It is followed by the agricultural and livestock sectors, which contribute 39%. Together, these sectors account for 90% of Pakistan's total emissions.³⁵⁷ Pakistan's per capita emissions of greenhouse gases are considerably below the global average. Yet high levels of population growth and urbanization are degrading the country's natural ecosystems, while causing water and air quality to deteriorate rapidly.

The Government has launched several climate-related initiatives, including the *Clean and Green Pakistan* movement and the *Ecosystem Restoration Initiative*. The latter initiative aims to facilitate the transition towards an environmentally resilient Pakistan by mainstreaming climate adaptation and mitigation. It will do so through ecologically-targeted initiatives that involve afforestation, conserving biodiversity and enhancing the policy environment. Alongside national adaptation plans, disaster risk preparedness is a priority. So too are implementing and mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management at the sub-national level. Challenges persist in terms of capacity building, data availability, assessments of risks and vulnerabilities, and financing for climate change policies.

SDG 14 – Life Below Water

Limited data on SDG 14 in Pakistan makes it difficult to analyse progress on this goal. Fisheries account for less than 0.6% of Pakistan's GDP.³⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the marine sector is a significant economic pursuit for people



living along the coasts of Sindh and Balochistan, and small-scale aquaculture and inland fisheries exist nationwide. Fisheries employ 390,000 people directly. When secondary jobs are considered – such as processing, transport and retail – the number of jobs rises to between 900,000 and 1.8 million.³⁵⁹

Pakistan's fisheries face complex challenges and are not achieving their economic potential. The overall production of marine capture fisheries has decreased since the 1990s, as has their per unit value. The country's marine fisheries are both depleted and overfished. Continuing current fishing levels will seriously undermine production and marine ecosystems. Production has declined even while total fishing efforts – that is, the harvest capacity of the fishing fleet and the time spent fishing – has increased. Post-harvest losses, substantial in agriculture nationwide, are high in the fisheries sector due to a lack of investment in cold chain infrastructure. Costs are also high, which undermines the sector's profitability. The shrinking resource base below water weakens livelihoods in vulnerable, small-scale fishing communities.

Despite good agro-climatic conditions, Pakistan lags behind its neighbours in aquaculture production. Bangladesh and India are among the world's top-five aquaculture-producing countries, whereas Pakistan ranks 28th.³⁶⁰ The underlying potential of Pakistan's fisheries and aquatic resources is not reflected in current production, growth or value. The sector has much more to offer in terms of boosting export revenues, creating decent jobs, supporting livelihoods in coastal communities, improving domestic nutrition and food security, and closing Pakistan's significant economic gender gap. The Government of Pakistan recognizes these opportunities and has signaled its desire to increase fisheries' contribution to these goals. However, there is an extreme paucity of information on improving yields, on a sustainable basis, from various types of water bodies. Pakistan needs to adopt *sustainable* fisheries measures that do not reduce or endanger fish stocks. This can be achieved by strengthening capacities on sustainable fishery management, underpinned by up-to-date multidisciplinary knowledge of the state of fish stocks at sea – from coastal areas to offshore deep waters – as well as the fishery sector's social and economic dynamics. It is vital to raise public awareness of the hazards of degrading fish stocks – both for livelihoods and for marine ecosystems – through the media.

SDG 15 – Life on Land

Forests cover 4.72 million hectares in Pakistan. This is roughly 5.36% of its land area, far less than in Sri Lanka (42.4%) or India (23.7%).³⁶¹ In fact, Pakistan has one of the lowest levels of forest cover in the region, well below the 12% threshold recommended by the UN. To meet domestic needs and improve forest cover, the Federal Government launched the *Clean and Green Pakistan* movement and the *10 Billion Tree Tsunami* in 2018. The latter follows the *Billion Tree Afforestation Project* (BTAP) by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a massive reforestation project that added 350,000 hectares of trees – both by planting and natural regeneration – in a bid to restore the province's depleted forests and combat the impact of climate change.

Pakistan's forestry sector, accounting for a 2.13% share in agriculture and 0.41% in GDP, grew by 2.29% in 2019. Given the country's high 'man-to-land' ratio and limited prospects for expanding arable land, production will have to be enhanced through farm inputs and innovative means. Land degradation afflicts a large proportion of agricultural land in the country. The suspended sediment load per square kilometre of drainage basins in Pakistan is one of the highest in the world. This is a useful indicator of the intensity of soil erosion, which has affected about 18 million hectares of land so far. Salt-affected soils are estimated to over 5 million hectares, while another 2 million hectares are waterlogged.

Biodiversity has continued to decline over the long-term. GermanWatch estimates that, between 1997 and 2016, Pakistan lost an average of 523.1 lives per year due to extreme environmental and weather conditions.³⁶² Wildlife and ecosystems are being decimated by habitat loss, intensive forest management, poor water management, pollution, climate change and population growth. For instance, mangrove forests are being over-harvested, threatening to deprive the country of a key natural resource that protects ports from flooding and provides breeding grounds for innumerable species of fish. Pakistan's large, growing population is placing ever



more pressure on its natural resource base. Poverty increasingly forces rural residents to exploit biodiversity at unsustainable rates. In 2015, Pakistan approved a *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* (NBSAP). Implementing this policy is vital, as is raising public awareness of the need to safeguard Pakistan's biodiversity, wildlife and ecosystems – precious natural resources that, once lost, can never be recovered.

Peace

SDG 16 – Peace and Justice and Strong Institutions

Pakistan has made marginal progress on SDG 16. It continues to perform poorly on Transparency International's *Corruption Perception Index* (CPI). With a score of 32 out of 100, it ranked 120th of 180 countries on the index in 2019.³⁶³ Despite moves towards an anti-corruption framework, more needs to be done. This includes curbing private sector corruption, improving asset recovery, monitoring political financing and ensuring effective protection for whistle-blowers. Important reforms include the *Anti-Money Laundering (Amendment) Bill* of 2019, the *Foreign Exchange Regulations (Amendment) Bill* of 2019 and the *Anti-Money Laundering (Amendment) Bill* of 2019, recently approved by the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Law and Justice also passed a draft *Whistle-blower Protection and Vigilance Commission Bill* in June 2019. The enactment of the *Companies Act* of 2017 is another major milestone for corporate governance and transparency.

Pakistan is categorized as 'partly free' by Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2020*. It ranks 145th of 180 countries and scored 45.52 on the *World Press Freedom Index 2020*.³⁶⁴ It improved its *Right To Information Rating* – from 91 in 2017 to 33 in 2018 – and ranked 105th of 150 countries on the RTI index.³⁶⁵ This appears tied to the Government promulgating the seminal *Right of Access to Information Bill*. As only 15.1% of Pakistani households have access to the internet³⁶⁶ (or 17% according to World Bank estimates³⁶⁷), Pakistan ranks 76th on the *Inclusive Internet Index*.³⁶⁸ There is a clear need to improve 'open government', particularly by advancing fiscal transparency through an open budget. Pakistan scored 28 out of 100 on the *Open Budget Survey 2019*, the lowest in the region and ranked 93rd of 117 countries. This marks a steep decline from its ranking of 58th in 2012 and 44th in 2017.³⁶⁹

The *Poverty Score Card Survey*, conducted by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund in 2018, shows that refugees in Pakistan are much poorer than host communities. More than half of the refugees in the country are 'extremely' or 'ultra' poor. Most live in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (58%) and Balochistan (23%). As noted above, the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have the lowest living standards and the highest rates of multidimensional poverty in Pakistan.

Millions of children in Pakistan remain deprived of their fundamental right to birth registration – a prerequisite for realizing their right to an official legal identity, a recognized name and citizenship. Birth registration for children under-five has increased from 33.4% to 42%.³⁷⁰ Thus, 58% are unregistered.³⁷¹ Gender disparities abound, with a strong bias in favour of boys. For instance, parents prefer to register boys in private schools that are believed to offer better quality education than public schools, the preferred option for educating girls. Children whose births go unregistered are unprotected from early and forced marriage, child labour and employment in hazardous industries, recruitment by armed groups, illegal adoption and trafficking. In the current COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in emergencies or crises in general, it is especially difficult to reunite unregistered children with their families if they become separated. Unregistered children are less likely to be included in development and social services' policies and planning, including education and health care. This makes universal birth registration vital for the well-being of children in Pakistan and, more broadly, for the country's sustainable development.

A lack of comprehensive, disaggregated data is among the greatest challenges to Pakistan's progress on SDG 16. For instance, there is a dearth of data on violence against children, indicating a clear need to report, monitor



and address child rights' violations. One promising move is Pakistan's successful 6th *Population and Housing Census* in 2017, the first national census in 19 years. While the 1998 Census recorded a population of 132.4 million, the 2017 Census' provisional results showed that it had grown to 207.8 million, 0.01% of whom were officially recorded as transgender persons. The World Bank's *World Development Indicators* estimate that the population has grown to 220.9 million in 2020.

Partnership

SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals

One of the reasons why the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are considered transformative is that they are based on human rights and a human rights-based approach to development. Over 90% of SDG targets are linked to human rights obligations. As Member States make progress on the SDGs, they make progress on human rights – these are two sides of the same coin. One important indicator of progress on the SDGs is the existence of independent national human rights institutions that comply with international standards, known as the *Paris Principles*. These institutions help to address inequality and discrimination by receiving and addressing complaints, while advising governments on rights-based legal frameworks. They also serve as a bridge between civil society and the state. They help build the capacity of human rights defenders, prevent human rights violations and devise strategies for the inclusion of marginalized people in all aspects of society.

Pakistan faces a significant funding gaps as it plans to achieve the SDGs. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy is projected to contract sharply, by 3% in 2020 – the worst recession since the Great Depression. Therefore, aid levels are falling and donor countries have not lived up to their pledge to ramp up development finance.

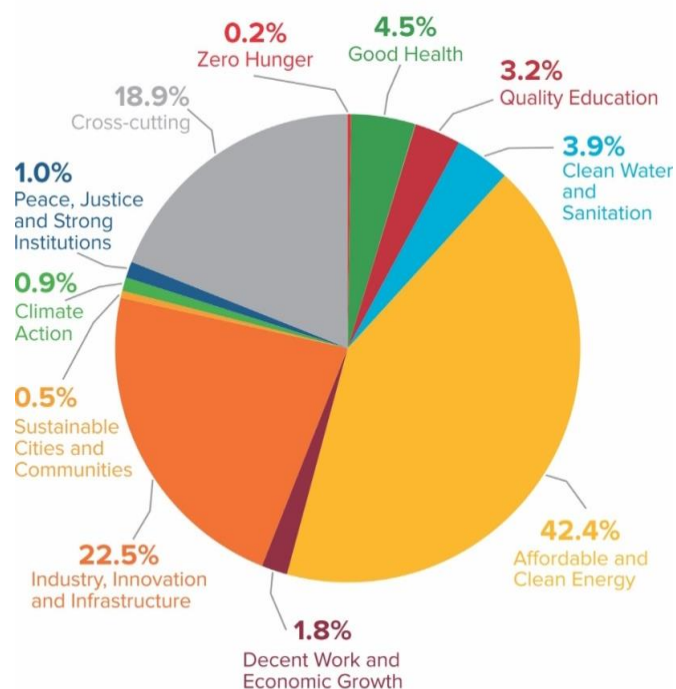
SDG 17 and its targets are critical to achieving all 17 goals. As it involves efforts beyond the purview of a single country, active collaboration among states is the most important lever for action to achieve SDG 17. Pakistan is exploring multi-stakeholder partnerships to create and share the knowledge, financial resources, expertise and technologies required to achieve the SDGs. Its provinces have each launched governance reform agendas to improve service delivery, focusing on transparency and access, results-based management and resource mobilization. The *Citizen Feedback Model* (CFM) is another important reform adopted across the provinces to collect users' feedback on the quality of public services. Pakistan is also promoting partnerships that focus on technological progress, supported by the use of information and communication technologies. In early 2019, Pakistan's 'tele-density' stood at 77% of the population.³⁷² As discussed above, an estimated 15.1% of households in Pakistan have access to the internet according to government sources – or 17% according to the World Bank. While this is a huge increase compared to the past decade³⁷³, internet access remains very low.

With its vast number of targets and indicators, it is challenging to monitor and measure progress on the 2030 Agenda. A lack of funding and resources are among the most important challenges for SDG monitoring. Another challenge is the lack of *adequate* data: poor data quality, incomplete sets of indicators, insufficient coverage and a lack of disaggregation by gender, age and other characteristics. Implementing the SDGs effectively requires well-designed policies that are grounded on context-specific knowledge and high quality data. It is imperative that Pakistan collects such data and, above all, *acts* on it. Only in this way can it fulfil its pledge to leave no one behind.



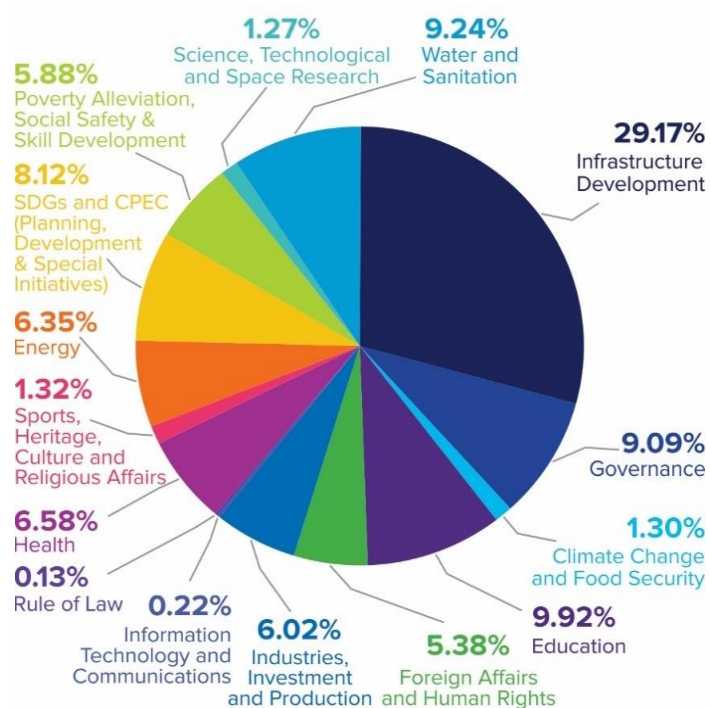
Annex V. SDG financing

Annex V Figure 1. Total allocations to the SDGs by goal, 2014–2017



Source: Mapping PSDP with SDGs (2013-2014) and (2016-2017) -Draft 2020 by Federal SDGs Support Unit, Islamabad

Annex V Figure 2. Overview of development budget expenditure by Pakistan's Federal and Provincial Governments, 2020–21



Source: SDGs Implementation Snapshots - Snapshot of country level SDGs implementation in Asia Pacific Pakistan by UNDP and ADB – Draft zero 2020

Annex VI. Background on ‘leaving no one behind’ work in Pakistan

Five dimensions of leaving no one behind

Annex VI Figure 1. The five dimensions of leaving no one behind



Source: Adopted from UNDP (2018). What does it mean to leave no one behind?

Almost all SDG indicators are directly relevant to measuring inequalities, as long as they are consistently disaggregated. Many indicators are also directly relevant to combatting discrimination and inequalities, including those in the illustrative – albeit not comprehensive – list below.

Annex VI Table 1. Key SDG indicators relevant to leaving no one behind

Indicators on discrimination include all of SDG 5's indicators and many of SDG 10's indicators, including, for example:	
5.1.1	Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
10.3.1	Percentage of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the last 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law
Indicators relevant for income and economic inequalities, including, for example:	
10.1.1	Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40% of the population and the total population
10.2.1	Proportion of people living below 50% of median income, disaggregated by age group, sex and persons with disabilities
10.4.1	Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers



5.4.1	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
5.a.1 (a)	Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
5.a.2	Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.c.1	Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment
8.5.2	Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities
8.6.1	Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training
Indicators relevant for social inequalities, including, for example:	
1.a.2	Spending on essential services (education, health and social protection) as a percentage of total government spending
1.3.1	Percentage of the population covered by social protection floors/systems, disaggregated by sex and distinguishing children, the unemployed, old-age persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women/ newborns, work injury victims, the poor and the vulnerable
4.5.1	Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous people and conflict-affected as data become available) for all indicators on this list that can be disaggregated
Indicators relevant for political inequalities, including, for example:	
5.5.1	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments
5.5.2	Proportion of women in managerial positions
16.7.1	Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service and judiciary) compared to national distributions
16.7.2	Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group
16.10.1	Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months
Indicators relevant for global inequalities, including, for example:	
10.6.1	Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations
10.a.1	Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff
13.b.1	Number of least developed countries and small island developing States that are receiving specialized support and the amount of support, including finance, technology and capacity-building, for mechanisms for raising capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities
15.6.1	Number of countries that have adopted legislative, administrative and policy frameworks to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits
16.8.1	Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations

Annex VI Table 2. Selected indicators relevant to leaving no one behind in Pakistan

Indicators	National	Place of residence		Wealth quintile			Source
		Urban	Rural	Lowest	Middle	Highest	
Under-five mortality rate	74	56	83	100	82	56	PDHS 2017-18
Skilled birth attendance	69	84	63	46	72	93	PDHS 2017-18
Adolescent birth rate (15-19 years old)	46	42	47	55	53	24	PDHS 2017-18



Percentage of women aged 20–24 who were married or in a union before the age of 18	18.3						PDHS 2017–18
Percentage of women's demands for family planning satisfied with modern methods	48.6	50.2	47.5	40.1	49.6	51.1	PDHS 2017–18
Percentage of women subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence	33.5	30	35.5	34.8	36	24.6	PDHS 2017–18
Proportion of the population using improved drinking water	94.1	96.6	92.7				PDHS 2017–18
Proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities	70.5	88.4	60.2				PDHS 2017–18
Prevalence of stunting (height for age) among children under 5 years of age	37.6	30.7	40.9	57	32	22	PDHS 2017–18
Prevalence of malnutrition (weight for height) among children under 5 years of age	7.1	6.7	7.3	9.4	5.3	3.7	PDHS 2017–18
Proportion of youth (aged 15–24) not in education, employment or training	41	33.7	29.53				PDHS 2017–18
Spending on essential services (education, health care and social protection) as a percentage of total government spending							
Percentage of the population covered by social protection							
Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with a civil authority	42.2	60.3	33.6	9.3	44.2	76	LFS 2017–18

Levels, trends and determinants of the five dimensions of 'leaving no one behind' in Pakistan

Economic drivers of vulnerability

Some 38.8% of Pakistan's population lives in multidimensional poverty.³⁷⁴ Pakistan's cycle of high population growth, coupled with poor health and education outcomes, contributes to persistent socio-economic, gender-based and geographic inequalities. COVID-19 has influenced all domains of multidimensional poverty – intensifying its incidence and intensity, especially for the most vulnerable – the elderly, persons with disabilities, women children and non-nationals among others. As a result of the pandemic, 56.6% of Pakistan's population has become susceptible to becoming multidimensionally vulnerable. An estimated 126 million people are likely to be pushed into multidimensional poverty.³⁷⁵ Children already comprise half of all extremely poor people and are twice as likely to be poor than adults. The multidimensional aspects of child poverty and economic distress are likely to force more children into child labour and child marriage. The bottom line is clear: poverty has grave, long-term consequences for children and children are at greater risk of being poor.

Socio-economic and geographic drivers of vulnerability

Pakistan's has an estimated population of 220.9 million.³⁷⁶ Approximately 51% are under 19 years old and 13% are between 0 and 4 years old.³⁷⁷ Article 25A of Constitution of Pakistan requires the state to provide free and compulsory quality education all children between 5 and 16 years old. Yet Pakistan has the second-highest number of out-of-school children in the world. The *Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2018–19* finds that 30% of children between 5 and 16 years old are out of school, down slightly from 33% in 2013–14.³⁷⁸ Balochistan has the highest percentage of out-of-school children in this age group, followed by



Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. There are clear disparities in the proportion of out-of-school children between provinces, as well as between socio-economic groups and geographic (rural-urban) locations.

Global evidence estimates the economic costs of violence against children at US\$7 trillion per year. According to data from Punjab's *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (MICS) in 2018, 80.8% of children between 1 and 14 years old suffered physical punishment and/or psychological aggression at the hands of caregivers in the month before the survey. In 2017, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's MICS reported that 77% of children experienced psychological aggression, 64% physical punishment and 25% severe forms of physical punishment – including being hit on the head, ears or face, being hit hard and being hit repeatedly. Experiences of such violence continue to be pervasive in Punjab as well, cutting across all socio-economic cohorts and geographic locations. Similar rates are evident across urban and rural areas, among girls and boys, and across wealth quintiles.

Health gains in Pakistan are being overshadowed by communicable diseases and the urgent need to improve the public health system. Frequent outbreaks of polio, measles, diphtheria (VPDs), dengue and typhoid fever pose the greatest challenge for its health system, further exacerbated the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child notes that 35% of the deaths among children under-five in Pakistan are primarily due to their lack of access to safe drinking water, as well as to malnutrition. One in eight adolescent girls and one in five adolescent boys is underweight, while 56.6% of adolescent girls are anaemic. Social-cultural barriers create bottlenecks that prevent young people from seeking support or services to meet their physical, mental, emotional and psychological needs. Moreover, access issues caused by poor infrastructure make it hard to reach remote areas, severely affecting children's and women's ability to access essential reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health services. Interruptions in food and nutrition services most severely affect the groups with the highest nutrition needs, especially children under-five, pregnant and lactating women and the elderly. Without increasing the health budget and social safety nets, out-of-pocket health expenditure will rise. The higher the cost of health care, the more vulnerable Pakistan's poorest and most marginalized groups will be.

The systematic exclusion of persons with disabilities persists in Pakistan despite its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, which specifically calls for the inclusion of persons with disabilities 11 times. Children with disabilities face increased risks, as they are likely to be more affected by reduced access to prevention and support services. The increasing gap between persons with disabilities, especially children with disabilities and their peers without disabilities highlights the failure of the development community to live up to the pledge of 'leaving no one behind'.

The immense size of Pakistan's urban population has important implications for public service delivery, particularly for children. The country has the highest rate of urbanization in South Asia.³⁷⁹ According to the 2017 Population Census, 36.4% of the population lives in urban areas, up from 32.5% in 1998. One of the main drivers of urban growth is migration from rural areas, driven by the search for better jobs and improved access to basic services, causing Pakistan's biggest cities to grow rapidly.³⁸⁰ In the absence of sufficient urban planning and physical and social infrastructure, urbanization a tremendous challenge for employment, social indicators and environmental sustainability – all of which will have a bearing on human rights, including child rights, particularly for those who live in peri-urban, marginal and at-risk areas.

Gender inequality is a major concern in Pakistan. The country ranks 151st of 153 on the *Global Gender Gap Index 2020* overall. It ranks 150th in terms of economic participation, 143rd on educational attainment and 93rd on women's political empowerment. The challenges facing women in Pakistan are interconnected and steeped in entrenched gender norms that underlie patriarchal gender stereotypes, inflexible gender roles and cultural restrictions – all of which are the root causes of gender-based discrimination, gender bias and gender-based violence (GBV). These causes prevent women and girls from exercising their rights to education, skills development, and economic and personal agency. Women and girls are highly likely to be discriminated against, undervalued and restricted in terms of their mobility and decision-making.



Several underrepresented groups are marginalized on the basis of gender, most notably women, girls and transgender persons. This focus on identity as a marker of marginalization exposes intersectional marginalized identities, which push certain groups to the periphery of society. For instance, the marginalization and invisibility of women with disabilities – who bear a double burden of discrimination and immense social stigma due to their gender and their disability – is dismissed as a non-issue. Bringing about a change in families’ mindsets to enable marginalized women to access education, engage in decent work and contribute to public life is neglected in Pakistan. Services remain inaccessible for women and all persons with disabilities. The use of language and terminology for persons with disabilities is rarely disability-sensitive and often explicitly derogatory. The mainstream media, government departments and the general public continue to use terms such as ‘crippled’, ‘retarded’ and other derogatory terms to describe them. The use of such terminology not only shows a lack of sensitization on disability issues, it also highlights that Pakistan is lagging far behind the rest of the world in its treatment of differently-abled citizens.

Pakistani women continue to have among the lowest labour force participation rates in South Asia. Legal barriers to women’s entrepreneurship are pervasive, especially for married women. Pakistan is among the countries where married women cannot register a business in the same way as a married man, as in countries like Bhutan and Suriname. Women are overrepresented in Pakistan’s informal economy, which accounts for an estimated 36% of the overall economy. Chief among these informal workers are women home-based workers and agricultural workers. Although they are part of some of the poorest households in the country, they remain largely beyond the protection of labour laws. Regardless of the rural-urban divide, women home-based workers are usually illiterate and lack financial independence. Women’s limited access to economic and social services, as well as financial resources, makes them highly vulnerable. Women and girls lag behind men and boys in terms of literacy rates, which stand at 52% and 72%, respectively.³⁸¹ During natural disasters, women and girls face additional risks, partly due to gender inequities that leave them to bear a disproportional impact of disasters.

Gender-based violence abounds in Pakistan, especially violence against women and girls (VAWG), manifest in high rates of domestic violence, honour killings, dowry violence, forced and child marriage, harassment and the denial of inheritance across rural and urban areas nationwide. As a result of stark gender bias, a significant proportion of women experience various forms of gender-based violence. According to the *Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–18*, 28% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence, 23% have only experienced physical violence, 1% have only experienced sexual violence and 5% have experienced both. Some 34% of women who are or have ever been married have suffered spousal violence – whether physical, sexual or emotional. Rural women are more likely to experience violence (30%) than women in urban areas (24%).³⁸² Women with disabilities or those belonging to minority groups face a higher risk of violence.

Low reporting of gender-based violence – either because survivors are unaware of their rights, because they fear retaliation and stigma from their families or communities, or because they do not trust the services available – results in limited data on its scale and intensity in Pakistan. Violence against women and girls significantly prevents them from fulfilling their potential, while undermining their education, employment and income generation opportunities. For instance, violence – both at home and at work – has a tremendous negative impact on women’s performance and productivity in the workplace, and consequently their professional development and career advancement. Violent relationships often include economic abuse – controlling women’s resources and income, depriving them of property or inheritance, limiting their opportunities and restricting their movements. Addressing violence against women will, therefore, have a positive impact on women’s social and economic empowerment. This, in turn, can reduce the risk of violence by improving women’s financial autonomy, agency and self-esteem. Women’s enhanced financial contributions to their households can increase their bargaining power at home, thereby reducing their vulnerability to domestic violence. It can also increase their decision-making power, enabling women to make better choices for themselves and their families – choices that can help them break cycles of poverty and marginalization, such as deciding to educate their children.



While government planning instruments prioritize basic rights, gender equality and women's empowerment as central elements for national development, challenges prevent steady progress on these commitments. More efforts are required to translate international and national policy frameworks into action. Similarly, while the rule of law is growing stronger, it is not strong enough. Parallel state and customary judicial processes coexist. Women's access to justice is impeded by a range of factors – ranging from restricted mobility to gender-insensitive legal support structures. On the legislative front, the past decade has seen a wave of pro-women laws, mainly in the form of amendments to the Penal Code. Particularly significant moves are the recognition of so-called 'honour' crimes as a criminal offence, alongside legislation on rape, sexual harassment, forced marriage, deprivation of inheritance and the exchange of women between disputing groups as a form of settlement. Three of Pakistan's four provinces now have laws on domestic violence. Laws also exist to protect women against workplace sexual harassment. These outline complaint mechanisms and functioning Ombudspersons offices at the federal and provincial levels to create a conducive, gender-sensitive workplace environment. Despite legislative and normative progress, laws are often not effectively implemented. This poses a huge challenge at both the national and sub-national levels. Weak implementation is compounded by low levels of awareness and weak response mechanisms, leading to impunity for perpetrators and limited support or justice for survivors.

Overall, the pace of progress remains uneven, slow-moving and plagued by challenges. Nevertheless, promising initiatives are being implemented. A recent study by UN Women in the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa³⁸³ finds evidence of several women's economic empowerment interventions by government departments and non-governmental organizations. Hundreds of women have graduated from such schemes, reflecting communities' willingness to engage in productive activities. The study also highlights a shift in men's views of women's participation in economic activities due to limited agriculture land, a lack of water for irrigation, limited opportunities for income generation and inflation. Its findings indicate the opportunities available in the Newly Merged Districts to scale up efforts around women's economic empowerment, provided that these are tailored to suit local dynamics.

Vulnerability to shocks and fragility due to COVID-19

COVID-19 is taking a devastating toll on Pakistan's social and economic fabric, with especially dire consequences for vulnerable groups like the poor, the elderly, women, children, daily wage labourers, refugees and non-nationals.³⁸⁴ It is driving up unemployment, increasing the burden of unpaid care work, limiting access to services such as education and health, and promoting growing risks of violence against women, children and minorities. While COVID-19 does not discriminate in whom it attacks, vulnerable groups tend to suffer the most from its impact. The pandemic has deepened and exacerbated existing inequalities for the most marginalized people in the country. It has intensified existing trends of hardening community attitudes, cultural and religious intolerance, and the increasing marginalization of minorities.

The best case scenario – a 10% decline in the use of three key public health services – would lead to 1,100 additional maternal deaths in 2020 alone. The worst case scenario – a 20% decline in the use of these services – would cause an additional 2,100 maternal deaths. Reduced access to contraception, border closures, supply chain disruptions and fear of exposure to the coronavirus could cause the unmet need for family planning services to spike by up to 30% in 2020. This will cause a surge in maternal and newborn mortality, the unmet need for contraception, potential lifelong morbidities, disabilities like obstetric fistula and gender-based violence.

Mapping relevant international human rights obligations and commitments

There are nine core human rights conventions, of which Pakistan has ratified seven:

- 1) the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, ratified on 23 June 2010;
- 2) the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, ratified on 17 April 2008.
- 3) the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, ratified on 12 March 1996;
- 4) the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, ratified on 2 September 1966;
- 5) the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, ratified on 5 July 2011;
- 6) the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified on 20 November 1990; and
- 7) the *Convention against Torture*, ratified on 23 June 2010.³⁸⁵

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

The ICCPR establishes a framework for states to protect and promote the civil and political rights of their citizens. It also emphasizes the importance of rectifying rights violations. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, together with the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, are known as the 'International Bill of Rights'.

National legislation relevant to ICCPR-guaranteed rights

- *National Commission on the Status of Women Act 2012*
- *Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2012*
- *Investigation for Fair Trial Act 2013*
- *National Commission on Human Rights Act 2012*
- *Action in Aid of Civil Power Regulations 2011*
- *Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010*
- *Protection of Women (Criminal Laws) (Amendment) Act 2006*
- *Political Parties Order 2002*
- *Political Parties Rules 2002*
- *Election Commission Order 2002*
- *Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000*
- *Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992*
- *Pakistan Prison Rules 1978*
- *Probation of Offenders Ordinance 1960*
- *Probation of Offenders Rules 1961*

2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

The ICESCR encourages states to safeguard the economic, social and cultural rights of all citizens, alongside labour rights and rights to health, education and an adequate standard of living. Its provisions include:

Article 1	Self-determination
Article 2	State party obligations (to take steps, in accordance with the maximum available resources, to progressively realize the rights in the Treaty and to guarantee these rights without any form of discrimination)
Article 3	Equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of social, economic and cultural rights
Article 4	Limitation provision (limitations only permissible where they are compatible with the nature of the right and solely for the purpose of promoting the public good in a democratic society)
Article 5	Restriction and derogation provisions (no one is permitted to destroy any of the rights listed therein)
Article 6	Right to work
Article 7	Right to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work



Article 8	Right to form and join trade unions
Article 9	Right to social security
Article 10	Protection and assistance to be accorded to the family (special protection and assistance for mothers and children)
Article 11	Right to adequate standards of living (food, clothing, housing and the continuous improvement of living conditions)
Article 12	Right to enjoy highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
Article 13	Right to education
Article 14	Compulsory and free primary education
Article 15	Right to take part in cultural life and enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and artistic production
Articles 16–17	State party reports
Articles 18–19	Arrangements and reports by the Economic and Social Council
Article 20	State party comments on the general recommendations or other matters
Article 21	Submission of reports to the UN General Assembly's Economic and Social Council
Articles 22–25	Provisions on technical assistance and regional and technical meetings

National legislation relevant to ICESCR-guaranteed rights

- *Islamabad Mandatory Vaccination and Protection of Health Workers Bill 2015*
- *Sindh Injured Persons (Medical Aid) Act 2014*
- *Sindh Healthcare Commission Act 2014*
- *Sindh Epidemic Diseases Act 2014* (received the Governor's assent in January 2015; no further record)
- *Sindh Eye Surgery (Restriction) Act 2014* (received the Governor's assent in December 2014; no further record)
- *Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2013*
- *Reproductive Healthcare and Rights Act 2013* (news articles are the only evidence of this Act)
- *Balochistan Compulsory Education Act 2014*
- *Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2012*
- *Punjab Healthcare Commission Act 2010*
- *Sacked Employees (Re-instatement) Act 2010*
- *Social Security Bill 2010 (replaced by provincial laws)*
- *Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline and Accountability Act 2006*
- *NWFP Compulsory Primary Education Act 1996*
- *Punjab Compulsory Primary Education Act 1994*
- *Punjab Industrial Relations Act 2010*
- *Sindh Industrial Relations Act 2013*
- *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Industrial Relations Act 2010*
- *Balochistan Industrial Relations Act 2012*
- *Fatal Accident Act 1885*
- *Employers' Liability Act 1938*
- *War Injuries Ordinance 1941*
- *War Injuries (Compensation Insurance) Act 1943*
- *Workmen's Compensation Act 1923*
- *Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 (as adopted by Punjab through the Punjab Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Act 2013)*
- *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Workers' Compensation Act 2013*
- *Sindh Workers' Compensation Act 2015*
- *Workers Welfare Fund Ordinance 1971*
- *Sindh Workers Welfare Fund Act 2014*
- *Employees Old-Age Benefits Act 1976*



- *Sindh Employees Old-Age Benefits Act 2014*
- *Provincial Employees Social Security Ordinance 1965*
- *Provincial Employees Social Security Ordinance 1965 (as adopted by Punjab through the Punjab Social Security (Amendment) Act 2013)*
- *Sindh Social Security Act 2016 (as amended by Sindh Social Security (Amendment) Act 2018)*
- *Sindh Occupational Safety and Health Act 2017*
- *Punjab Occupational Safety and Health Act 2019*
- *Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act 1976*
- *Sindh Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act 2014*
- *Workers' Welfare Fund Ordinance 1971*
- *Sindh Workers Welfare Fund Act 2014*
- *Workmen's Compensation Act 1923*
- *Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 (as adopted by Punjab through the Punjab Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Act 2013)*
- *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Worker's Compensation Act, 2013*

The following administrative measures relevant to the ICESCR should also be noted:

- *National Labour Policy 2010 (and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh Labour Policies 2018)*
- *National Education Policy 2009*
- *National Employment Policy 2009*
- *National Plan of Action for the Abolition of Child Labour*

3. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW's overarching purpose is to eradicate any practices or laws that discriminate against women on the basis of their sex and to provide a manifesto of equal opportunities and rights through the domestic enforcement of women's fundamental rights. In summary, CEDAW's provisions include:

Article 1	Definition of discrimination
Article 2	Policy measures (duty of state parties to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices in the national legal framework)
Article 3	Guarantee of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms
Article 4	Special measures (temporary special measures to enhance equality)
Article 5	Sex role stereotyping and prejudice (modification or elimination of practices based on the assumptions of the inferiority of women)
Article 6	Prostitution and trafficking
Article 7	Political and public life
Article 8	Representation
Article 9	Nationality
Article 10	Education
Article 11	Employment
Article 12	Health
Article 13	Economic and social benefits
Article 14	Rural women
Article 15	Equality of men and women before the law
Article 16	Marriage and family life
Article 17	Provision on the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
Article 18	National reports
Article 19	Rules of procedure
Article 20	Committee meetings



Article 21	Committee reports
Article 22	Role of specialized agencies
Article 23	Effect on other treaties
Article 24	Commitment of state parties
Articles 25–30	Administration of the Convention

National legislation related to CEDAW-guaranteed rights

- *Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Bill 2015*
- *Punjab Commission on the Status of Women Act 2014*
- *Sindh Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2013*
- *Reproductive Healthcare and Rights Act 2013*
- *National Commission on the Status of Women Act 2012*
- *Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act 2011*
- *Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act 2011*
- *Criminal Law (Third Amendment) Act 2011* (on the prevention of anti-women practices)
- *Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act 2010*
- *Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2010* (on sexual harassment)
- *Punjab Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010*
- *Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act 2009*
- *The Criminal Law Amendment Act 2009*
- *North-West Frontier Province Establishment of a Commission on the Status of Women Act 2009*
- *Protection of Women (Criminal Laws) (Amendments) Act 2006*
- *Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2004* (on so-called 'honour' crimes)
- *Family Courts Act 1964*
- *Muslim Family Laws Ordinance 1961*
- *West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance 1958*
- *West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Rules 1961*
- *Mines Maternity Benefit Act 1941*
- *Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929*
- *Civil Servants Rules*
- *Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2014*
- *Punjab Fair Representation of Women Act 2014*
- *Balochistan Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Act 2014*

4. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The aim of the CRC is to set standards for the protection of children against abuse, neglect and exploitation. It addresses the right to possess, receive and have access to services that are essential for children's well-being. It mandates the protection of children from harmful acts and practice, while affirming children's right to be heard on the decisions that affect their lives. In addition, it provides for progressive participation in matters that impact children. The CRC's provisions include:

Article 1	Definition of the child
Article 2	Non-discrimination
Article 3	Best interests of the child (these must be the primary consideration while taking decisions that affect the child)
Article 4	Protection of rights (through all available measures)
Article 5	Parental guidance
Article 6	Survival and development
Article 7	Registration, name, nationality and care
Article 8	Preservation of identity



Article 9	Separation from parents
Article 10	Family reunification
Article 11	Kidnapping
Article 12	Respect for the views of the child
Article 13	Freedom of expression
Article 14	Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
Article 15	Freedom of association
Article 16	Right to privacy
Article 17	Access to information and the mass media
Article 18	Parental responsibilities, state assistance
Article 19	Protection from all forms of violence
Article 20	Children deprived of a family environment
Article 21	Adoption
Article 22	Refugee children
Article 23	Children with disabilities
Article 24	Health and health services
Article 25	Review of treatment in care
Article 26	Social security
Article 27	Adequate standard of living
Article 28	Right to education

National legislation related to CRC-guaranteed rights

The Senate passed a bill on 11 March 2016 criminalizing sexual assault against minors, child pornography and child trafficking. This amendment to the Penal Code will come into force once it is ratified by the President. Its salient features include: raising the age of criminal responsibility from 7 to 10 years of age punishing sexual assault with up to 7 years in prison and punishing child pornography with 7 years in prison and a fine of PKR 700,000.

- *Criminal Law (Amendment Bill) 2015* (providing for the protection of children; adopted by the Senate)
- *Sindh Child Protection Authority Act 2011*
- *Child Protection and Welfare Act (CPWA) 2010*
- *Protection of Children Act 2006* (there is no evidence that this went beyond the bill stage)
- *Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act 2004*

5. Convention against Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)

The Convention requires state parties to end torture within their jurisdiction and criminalize all acts of torture. It goes beyond many other international instruments in that it offers a general definition of torture as the infliction of severe physical and/or mental suffering committed under the colour of the law. The Convention does not allow any room for the use of torture in emergencies or exigent circumstances. Its provisions include:

Article 1	Definition of torture
Article 2	State party obligations (effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures)
Article 3	Obligation of non-refoulement
Article 4	Criminalization of all acts of torture
Article 5	Establishing jurisdiction over torture-related offences
Article 6	Taking custody and making preliminary inquiry into facts
Article 7	Submission of case of torture for prosecution
Article 8	Extradition
Article 9	Supply of evidence and mutual judicial assistance



Article 10	Training of law enforcement personnel, whether civil or military, medical personnel, public officials and other persons involved in custody, interrogation, or the treatment of anyone subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment
Article 11	State parties' obligations to systematically review interrogation rules, instructions, methods and practices
Article 12	Prompt and impartial investigation in cases where there are reasonable grounds to believe that an act of torture has been committed
Article 13	Right to complain and have case heard promptly and to be impartially examined (protection of complainants and witnesses)
Article 14	Right to obtain redress and receive adequate compensation
Article 15	Evidence gathered through torture is deemed inadmissible
Article 16	Preventing acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or punishment by public officials
Articles 17–24	Provisions on the Committee against Torture, election to the Committee, states parties' reports, cooperation between states parties and the Committee, the inter-state complaints procedure, individual communications procedure, ad hoc conciliation commissions and annual reports of the Committee
Articles 25–33	Provisions on ratification and accession, amendments, inter-state disputes, denunciation and languages in which the text of the Convention is authentic

National legislation related to CAT-guaranteed rights

Pakistan has yet to enact specific legislation that incorporating the provisions of the Convention against Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Nonetheless, the following legislative instruments provide similar protections as those afforded under the Convention:

- Article 14 of the Constitution of Pakistan
- Section 44 of the Penal Code
- *Prisons Act 1894*
- *Prison Rules 1978*
- *Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline and Accountability Act 2006*
- *Abolition of the Punishment of Whipping Act 1996*
- *Police Order 2002* (Article 35, Article 114(1)(c), Article 114(2) and Article 156(d))

6. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

The purpose of the CRPD is to protect, promote and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms by all persons with disabilities. By persons with disabilities, it refers to persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may obstruct their full and effective participation and engagement in society on an equal basis with others. Moreover, it makes specific reference to women and children with disabilities. In summary, its provisions include:

Article 1	Purpose of Convention (promoting, protecting and ensuring the enjoyment of all rights and freedoms by persons with disabilities)
Article 2	Definitions of key terms (including communication, language, discrimination on the basis of disability, reasonable accommodation and universal design)
Article 3	General principles (respect for dignity, non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, respect for difference, equality of opportunity, accessibility, equality between men and women, and respect for children)
Article 4	General obligations (to take all measures to promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for persons with disabilities and the obligation of non-discrimination)



Article 5	Equality and non-discrimination
Article 6	Women with disabilities
Article 7	Children with disabilities
Article 8	Awareness raising
Article 9	Accessibility
Article 10	Right to life
Article 11	Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies
Article 12	Equal recognition before the law
Article 13	Access to justice
Article 14	Liberty and security of person
Article 15	Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
Article 16	Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse
Article 17	Protecting the integrity of the person
Article 18	Liberty of movement and nationality
Article 19	Living independently and being included in the community
Article 20	Personal mobility
Article 21	Freedom of expression, opinion and access to information
Article 22	Respect for privacy
Article 23	Respect for home and the family
Article 24	Education
Article 25	Health
Article 26	Habilitation and rehabilitation
Article 27	Work and employment
Article 28	Adequate standard of living and social protection
Article 29	Participation in political and public life
Article 30	Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport
Article 31	Statistics and data collection
Articles 32–50	State parties' reporting obligations and how to effectively implement and monitor the Convention

Domestic legislation related to CRPD-guaranteed rights

- *Punjab Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) (Amendment) Act 2015*
- *Disabled Persons Employment and Rehabilitation (Amendment) Act 2012*
- *Mental Health Ordinance 2001*
- *Special Citizens (Right to Concessions in Movement) Act 2009* (there is no evidence of this as anything other than a bill)
- *Special Citizens Act 2008* (there is no evidence of this as anything other than a bill)
- *Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance 1981*

7. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)

The purpose of the ICERD is to promote and encourage the fundamental rights of all citizens, irrespective of their race, colour, sex, national origin, language or religion. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the fundamental rights of all citizens, irrespective of their race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth. The Convention also requires accurate statistics on marginalized communities. Its provisions include:

Article 1	Definition of racial discrimination
Article 2	State party obligations (legislation and otherwise)
Article 3	States parties' obligation to condemn racial segregation and apartheid
Article 4	States parties' obligation to condemn and penalize dissemination of racial propaganda, as well as the incitement to hatred and violence



Article 5	Equality and non-discrimination
Article 6	Effective protection and remedies
Article 7	Immediate and effective measures to combat racial prejudice (particularly in education)
Articles 8–16	Establishment of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the mechanism for implementation of the ICERD and the submission of initial and periodic reports
Articles 17–25	Provisions on the specific operation of the ICERD (ratification, accession, denunciation, inter-state disputes and languages in which the Convention is authentic)

National commitments and the legal status of different vulnerable groups

Comments and recommendations by international human rights bodies

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has urged Pakistan to end the forced conversion and forced marriage of Christian and Hindu Dalit women. The Committee on the Rights of the Child remains extremely concerned about serious discrimination and violence against girls, persistent gender disparities in infant mortality and school enrolment rates, and the prevalence of early marriage and the exchange of girls to settle debts. It is also concerned about the prevalence of domestic violence and marital rape, the absence of clear legislation criminalizing these crimes and the increasing number of infanticides targeting girls.

While noting the adoption of the *Anti-Rape Law (Criminal Amendment) Bill* in 2016 and the *Anti-honour Killing Law (Criminal Amendment Bill)*, the Committee against Torture has expressed concern about the high level of violence against women, including murder and so-called ‘honour killings’, rape, acid crimes, kidnapping, domestic violence and the extremely low conviction rates for these crimes. It is concerned by reports that parallel justice systems (*jirgas* and *panchayats*) have sentenced women to violent punishments or death (including by stoning) while meting out lenient punishments to the perpetrators of ‘honour’ crimes and serious gender-based violence. The Human Rights Committee recommends that Pakistan should effectively enforce laws to combat ‘honour’ killings, rape, violence against women and domestic violence. It has urged the Government to enforce the prohibition on applying *qisas* and *diyat* laws to so-called ‘honour’ crimes. It also calls for the continued regulation and supervision of *jirgas*.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has reiterated its concern at women’s low levels of participation in the judiciary of higher courts, as well as their total absence among Supreme Court judges. The United Nations Country Team has recommended that Pakistan enact, in a timely manner, the recent amendment to the *Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act* of 1997, which establishes a 25% quota for women judges in the Supreme Court.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has called on Pakistan to amend relevant laws in order to raise the quotas for women in the Senate, and National and Provincial Assemblies to at least 33%, in line with international standards. It urges the country to establish a procedure for filing complaints on women’s forced disenfranchisement, as well as to adopt a draft bill on re-polling in areas where fewer than 10% of women’s votes have been polled. It is also concerned about women’s low participation in the formal economy, the lack of recognition of women workers engaged in the informal economy, job segregation, women’s concentration in low-paid and low-skilled jobs, the widening pay gap, and the lack of legal provisions guaranteeing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. The Committee also recommends that Pakistan improve women’s and girls’ literacy rate, reduce and prevent dropouts among girls and formulate re-entry policies to enable young women to return to school after pregnancy.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has recommended that Pakistan take urgent legal measures to recognize the status of minorities other than religious minorities. They include racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities. This will enable all members of minority groups to enjoy their rights, while benefitting from policies and programmes designed to protect minority groups.



Legislative provisions on women's rights

The Government of Pakistan is committed to promoting and protecting women's rights by supporting their economic and political empowerment, as well as by eliminating violence and discrimination against them. Pakistan has passed laws to curb harmful customary practices and eliminate violence and discrimination against women. Recent legislation includes the *Anti-Rape (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill* and the *Anti-Honour Killings (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill* of 2016, the *Protection of Women from Harassment at Workplace Act* of 2010, the *Criminal Law Amendment Act (Prevention of Acid Crime)* and the *Prevention of Anti-Women Practice Act* of 2011, the *Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act* of 2006 and the *Criminal Law (Amendment) Act* of 2004, among others. The first two of these aim to address so-called honour killings and increase rape convictions by reforming existing laws. Under the new laws, victims' relatives are able to pardon killers convicted of capital punishment for honour killing, but killers will still face a mandatory life sentence of 25 years.

The provinces have enacted their own laws to protect and promote women's rights. These include, inter alia, the *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elimination of Custom of Ghag Act* of 2013, the *Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act* of 2014, the *Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act* of 2016 and the *Sindh Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act* of 2013.

Frameworks and measures to advance women's political and economic empowerment **include:**

- The *National Policy for the Development and Empowerment of Women* of 2002, which aims to mainstream gender in development processes.
- The *11th Five Year Plan (2013–2018)*, which includes a focus on gender and women's empowerment. PKR 2.7 billion has been allocated for women's empowerment and socio-economic development.
- Sixty seats are reserved for women in the National Assembly, as are 17 seats in the Senate and 17% of seats in provincial assemblies. Women are also able to run in elections for general seats, as well as seats reserved for minorities. Of 1,170 seats in all categories within national and provincial legislatures, 228 are held by women.
- 30% seats are reserved for women in the three tiers of local governance bodies, in line with the Beijing Platform for Action.
- The Federal Government has a 10% quota for women in the Central Superior Services. Sindh has recently raised the job quota for women from 5% to 15%. In 2013, Punjab raised the quota for women to 15%.
- The Government's Decent Work Country Programme includes a strategy and action plan to promote the creation of decent work opportunities. Gender equality is included as a cross-cutting theme.
- In addition to various loans, under the programmes launched by Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited, a large number of women farmers have been provided loans to access agro-credit schemes for agriculture.

Child rights

- The *Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act* of 2016 criminalizes child pornography, exposing children to sexually explicit material, cruelty to children, human trafficking in Pakistan and sexual abuse.
- The *Juvenile Justice System Bill* of 2017 aims to bring the juvenile justice system in line with international standards. It focuses on the disposal of cases through 'diversion' (that is, programmes which aim to avoid the formal processing of an offender by the criminal justice system) and the social-reintegration of child offenders.
- The *Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Ordinance* of 2016 protects children and adolescents against any form of slavery, sale, trafficking, debt bondage, forced and compulsory labour. The *Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour at Brick Kilns Act* of 2016 prohibits and penalizes child labour in brick kilns. The *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of the Employment of Children Act* of 2015 and the *Sindh Prohibition of the Employment of Children Act* of 2017 both prohibit the engagement of children under the age of 14 in labour.
- The South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC) is an apex body of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Pakistan plays a leading role in the implementation of the initiative's agenda and work plan to protect child rights.



- In line with the *National Policy Guidelines for Vulnerable Groups in Disasters* of 2014, Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has established a Gender and Child Cell. It aims to mainstream gender and child protection issues, as well as women's and children's vulnerabilities, in humanitarian response, crisis management and disaster risk reduction initiatives.
- The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), in collaboration with the Pakistan Police and Rangers, has cracked down on organized groups involved in human trafficking. In 2014–2015, the agency arrested 46 of Pakistan's 'most wanted' criminals and 1,236 proclaimed offenders involved in human trafficking, especially child trafficking. The agency set up a 24-hour helpline based in Islamabad to improve the reporting of trafficking and encourage survivors to access rehabilitation services.
- All of Pakistan's provinces have enacted child protection laws and have established child protection centres.

Rights of persons with disabilities

As a party to the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the Government of Pakistan has taken a number of steps to uphold the rights and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all walks of life. For instance:

- The *National Policy for Persons with Disabilities* was formulated in 2002. This affirms equality and non-discrimination as key elements.
- Pakistan's national development plan, *Vision 2025*, and the *11th Five-Year Plan* address the rights of persons with disabilities.
- As an affirmative measure, a 2% quota has been reserved for persons with disabilities in all academic institutions and employment.
- The Government of Punjab has raised the quota of jobs for persons with disabilities from 2% to 3%. It also launched the Punjab Khidmat Card initiative. This is Pakistan's first and only programme that provides interest free loans, free technical training, rehabilitation, welfare and financial assistance to persons with disabilities. Punjab has allocated PKR 2 billion for the first phase of the initiative, which aims to benefit 200,000 persons with disabilities. In a landmark judgment on 11 January 2017, the Lahore High Court struck down a discriminatory provision of the Civil Services Rules to enable persons with disabilities to join all government services on an equal basis.
- The *Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act* of 2017 aims to provide better facilities for persons with disabilities.
- Provincial Special Education Departments have been established to oversee the functioning of educational institutions for persons with disabilities.
- The Government of Pakistan has introduced accessible transportation (Metro Bus) for persons with disabilities. Pakistan International Airlines and Pakistan Railways offer a 50 % discount on fares for persons with disabilities and a 25% discount for their attendants.
- making at all levels in the public sector. Recently, Lahore High Court,
- Pakistan has been supportive of a disability-inclusive agenda at the international level, including a focus on inclusive education and social inclusion in the 2030 Agenda. A *Project for the Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities* has been introduced in select districts of Pakistan to advance inclusive education.

Rights of minorities

The Government has taken some administrative and policy measures to ensure that minorities enjoy equal rights as citizens of Pakistan. For example:

- There are 10 reserved seats for religious minorities in the National Assembly, four in the Senate and 23 in the provincial assemblies.
- The Government has fixed a 5% quota of minorities for jobs in all federal services, a slightly higher proportion than their estimated share of the national population (4%).



- The Government has allocated a special budget for scholarship grants for deserving students from minority communities. The size of this grant has recently been doubled.

Annex VI Table 3. Summary of key SDG data sources for vulnerable groups' rights and access to basic services

SDGs	Key data source	Data disaggregation by vulnerable group
SDG 1 (No Poverty)	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) Human Development Index/Multidimensional Poverty Index (HDI/MPI) Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES)	PSLM: No disaggregation by forced displacement status HDI: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status HIES: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status All sources: Need to add other groups e.g. the elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.
SDG 2 (No Hunger)	National Nutrition Survey (NNS) Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES), agriculture's share of government expenditure (%)	NNS: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status PSLM: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status HIES: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status
SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)	Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) Pakistan Maternal Mortality Survey (PMMS) 2019	PDHS: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status
SDG 4 (Quality Education)	National Education Census (NEC)	NEC: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status Note: NEC data are disaggregated by Pakistani nationals and non-nationals
SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS)	PSLM: No disaggregation by forced displacement status PDHS: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status
SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) Labour Force Survey (LFS)	PSLM: No disaggregation by forced displacement status HIES: No disaggregation by migrant or forced displacement status LFS: Provides data disaggregated by gender, location (province, and urban-rural areas), and the formal and informal economy. While it provides employment data for individuals aged 10 and older, it does not provide data on economically active children between 5–9 years old. The survey covers in-country migration (for Pakistani workers), but does not cover the 11 million Pakistan migrant workers employed overseas. Moreover, it does not cover refugees or migrant workers working in Pakistan.



Considering links between development challenges, human rights and gender: Leveraging data, trends and recommendations

Only with relevant, reliable, high quality and timely data will it be possible to develop tailored interventions to ensure that no one is left behind and that we reach those furthest behind first. In the absence of such data, individuals and groups in vulnerable situations are rendered invisible. Data and statistics disaggregated by population groups are, therefore, essential for designing and implementing socially-inclusive policies and programmes. The strategic implementation of the 2030 Agenda depends on the collection, analysis and dissemination of good quality, timely and reliable quantitative and qualitative data, disaggregated by – at a minimum – sex, age and geographic location. Such data are needed to make informed policy decisions that place the rights and needs of vulnerable individuals and groups on the agenda of national policies.

Understanding the situation of vulnerable groups is often challenging. Because they are marginalized, it can be difficult to reach them through regular means, such as household surveys or a census. Many marginalized groups are suspicious of official initiatives and hard to locate. For instance, disability data in Pakistan is varied and inconsistent. While the latest 2017 Census records a disability prevalence rate of 0.48%, the last Census in 1998 recorded a rate of 2.38%. One possible reason for this discrepancy may be the very late decision to separately count persons with disabilities, which could have affected the headcount.³⁸⁶ Using 'big data' may provide alternative means of discerning the size and challenges faced by members of vulnerable and marginalized groups, with safeguards in place to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

In December 2016, the Government of Pakistan established the SDG Support Unit in the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives – previously known as the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform – as a monitoring coordination mechanism for the implementation of the SDGs. An SDG Secretariat was set up by the Speaker of the National Assembly in 2016 for effective oversight, evidence-based legislation and representation. It has helped to enhance the capacity of provincial offices at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) to act as provincial SDG Secretariats. It also facilitates regular knowledge sharing and vertical and horizontal coordination between the National and Provincial Assemblies. Dedicated sub-committees are working proactively on individual SDG targets. Indicators have also been developed to measure progress on these targets. A Parliamentary Task Force has been created to oversee Pakistan's overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



Annex VII. Multidimensional risks matrix

Risk dimension	Brief description	Mitigation	Impact	Likelihood
Democratic space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The international frameworks to which Pakistan is committed affirm the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly, participation in public affairs, equality and non-discrimination <i>for all</i>, without any kind of distinction. These rights apply to women, children, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to minority groups or groups at risk of marginalization or exclusion, including victims of discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as non-nationals, including stateless persons, refugees or migrants. These international standards apply to all branches of the state: executive, legislative and judicial. They also apply to all other public or governmental authorities, at all levels: national, regional and local. Despite this, inequality remains pronounced in Pakistan. Compared to its <i>Human Development Index</i> (HDI) value of 0.560 in 2018 – already far lower than the average of South Asian countries (0.634) – its <i>Inequality-adjusted HDI</i> (IHDI) was 0.386 for the same year. This signifies a loss of 31.1% of its HDI value due to inequality, largely due to inequality in education (43.5%) and life expectancy at birth (29.9%). Gender inequality is especially pronounced. Women’s HDI value in 2018 was 0.464, far below men’s HDI value of 0.622. Pakistan’s <i>Gender Inequality Index</i> (GII) value for 2018 was 0.547, earning it a ranking of 154th of 189 countries on the index. An analysis of gender gaps across the ‘life course’ reveals that gender inequality is especially pronounced for young girls, adolescent girls and young women. The evolving role of digital media has profoundly affected the relationship between citizens and the state. It has empowered citizens with more information and enabled governments to improve transparency and accountability. Yet, challenges are gradually contributing to the erosion of democratic spaces, as well as attacks on civil society and the media. These challenges include fake news, biased systems and growing assaults on privacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uphold the fundamental rights of all the people in Pakistan, while making a concerted effort to address all kinds of inequality, particularly gender inequality. Support a safe and enabling environment for civil society with a robust national legal framework, grounded in international human rights law. Strengthen relationships between state institutions which determine the separation of powers, the role of parliaments and the overall transparency of the political process. Various jurisdictions should explore policy measures that could help tackle disinformation and the misuse of online social media platforms. 	Medium	High
Socio-economic stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan’s <i>Multidimensional Poverty Index</i> calculated that 38.8% of the population was multidimensionally poor in 2015. This appears to have declined slightly to 38.3% according to Pakistan’s MPI estimation for 2017/2018. The average multidimensional poverty ‘deprivation score’ in Pakistan is 51.7%, the highest in South Asia. Growing regional disparity in economic development has aggravated socio-economic circumstances of the vulnerable populations largely reside in rural and marginalized regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical support to the Ministry of Education, alongside assistance for strengthening learning assessment mechanisms and provincial Departments of Education. Offer incentives to girls and disadvantaged groups – such as the 	Medium	High



Risk dimension	Brief description	Mitigation	Impact	Likelihood
	<p>such as Balochistan and NMD in KP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan has the highest number of out-of-school children worldwide after Nigeria (22.8 million, 53% of whom are girls). Some 44% of Pakistani children between 5 and 16 years old did not participate in education in 2017. The quality of education is poor due to weak capacity among teachers, poor infrastructure, and poor curricula and assessment systems that hamper students' ability to achieve adequate learning outcomes. Pakistan has an alarming burden of malnutrition. 40.2% of children under-five are stunted (12 million), 17.7% suffer from wasting – exceeding WHO's emergency threshold of 15% – and 2.5 million are severely wasted.³⁸⁷ According to the <i>State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020</i>, the prevalence of undernourishment is 12.3% in Pakistan, with 26 million people either undernourished or food-insecure. Food insecurity is particularly acute in areas affected by crises, notably the Newly Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The <i>Comprehensive Food Security and Livelihood Assessment (CFLSA)</i> conducted by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and WFP in 2019 found that more than one in three households in the Newly Merged Districts are severely or moderately food insecure. Over half of the households in the region regularly use at least one negative coping strategy to meet their subsistence food needs (e.g. borrowing, selling assets or withdrawing children from school). Sustainable access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities is a particular challenge in health centres and schools, especially affecting girls. The effects of climate change and rapid urbanization also pose challenges for improving access to safe water and sanitation. Infectious diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria remain the leading causes of death among children under-five. According to the <i>Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2015–16</i>, performance on indicators of 'living standards' is particularly poor compared to indicators on health and education. These include the proportion of the population in vulnerable employment, rural people's access to electricity and the proportion of the population who use improved drinking water sources and improved sanitation facilities. Government departments lack the capacity to fully prevent and respond to child protection concerns. 	<p>provision of cash, books, uniforms and meals – to bolster enrolment in education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate with the Government of Pakistan, especially the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination, for the integration of health and nutrition programmes. Ensure strong technical support in terms of transferring responsibility for the <i>Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) Programme</i> to the Government. Implement a communications strategy for polio eradication that increases risk perception and promotes vaccination. Support and facilitate community-led initiatives on good hygiene habits – especially handwashing with soap – and building, maintaining and using basic toilets. Urgently support income generation and decent work opportunities, improve access to energy – especially in rural areas – and expand access to WASH facilities and services. 		
Environment and climate (natural disasters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent earthquakes occur especially in north and western Pakistan. Pakistan has experienced several severe, deadly earthquakes and all of its provinces are seismically active areas. The Kashmir earthquake on 8 October 2005, with a Moment Magnitude of 7.6 affected over 3.5 million people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt the <i>Action Plan of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR)</i> at the national and provincial levels to 	High	High



Risk dimension	Brief description	Mitigation	Impact	Likelihood
	<p>– in terms of loss of life, injury, lost assets and temporary displacement. It killed 87,350 people, a death toll that makes it the deadliest earthquake on record in South Asia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent flooding along the Indus River occurs after increasingly heavy monsoon rains in July and August. In 2020, floods killed 249 people. The parts of Pakistan most affected by flooding are Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In addition to human and livestock deaths, displacement, damage to assets and crops, floods also prompt landslides, road blockages and increase the risk of waterborne and vectorborne diseases, among other challenges. • Drought has become a frequent phenomenon in Pakistan. Give the arid and hyper arid climate in the country's southern reaches, many areas are extremely vulnerable to drought. From 2018 to 2019, Pakistan parts of Sindh and Balochistan recorded 'reduced rainfall' of 69.5% and 45%, respectively. This caused acute shortages of water, food and fodder, severely impacting the livelihoods of vulnerable populations. • Water pollution from raw sewage, industrial waste and agricultural runoff is considerable. Pakistan has limited natural fresh water resources and most of the population does not have access to potable water. Deforestation, soil erosion and desertification are all on the rise. • Climate change threatens the effective enjoyment of a range of human rights, including the right to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture and development.³⁸⁸ Pakistan country ranks fifth on the GermanWatch <i>Global Climate Risk Index 2020</i> of countries most affected by climate change. According to the index, between 1999 and 2018, Pakistan suffered 152 extreme weather events, causing 9,989 deaths and economic losses of US\$3.8 billion. A UNDP report from 2018 estimates that all kinds of natural hazards have affected over 50 million people, killed 80,708 and caused US\$25.5 billion in damages in the last decade. • Women's rights to health, food and livelihoods are among the rights most disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and climate change.³⁸⁹ • The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented public health and livelihood crisis across Pakistan. Alongside its effects on the economy and health care, it has taken a heavy toll on education, nutrition and WASH. 	<p>strengthen social and economic resilience and preparedness against natural hazards. This will be key to strengthening social and economic resilience, while mitigating the negative effects of natural and manmade disasters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with National, Provincial and District Disaster Management Authorities, implementing partners and across sectors to prepare for, reduce and mitigate disaster risks. • Use the lessons learned from the current COVID-19 pandemic to improve future crisis response. • Invest in preparedness to minimize future economic damage caused by pandemics and health crises. 		
Justice and the rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The efficient and effective provision of justice and law enforcement by the state is vital to maintain peace and security. Yet, Pakistan experiences considerable challenges in terms of access to justice and the enforcement of legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adherence to the principles of the supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to 	Medium	High



Risk dimension	Brief description	Mitigation	Impact	Likelihood
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall perceptions of government accountability vary across the country. There is a high perception of impunity in Pakistan. Corruption is perceived to exist across institutions, such as the police and legal departments. Security forces are perceived as sometimes acting outside of, or not respecting, the law. A lack of competent criminal investigators is among the most serious problem facing criminal investigative services in Pakistan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the law, fairness in the application of the law, the separation of powers, inclusive equitable participation in decision-making, legal certainty, the avoidance of arbitrariness, and procedural and legal transparency. Identify promising approaches to these challenges to guide an effective recovery process and 'build back better' to ensure a rule of law-based society. 		
Political stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political commitment, state support, the engagement of national authorities and a collaborative working environment are essential for political stability. These are somewhat lacking in Pakistan. Maintaining seamless coordination, political support and commitment are imperative to ensure that international organizations can continue to provide assistance for Pakistan. Dedicated efforts are required to address challenges in this regard. Irregular changes are made to governance structures. The COVID-19 pandemic poses challenges to political stability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enact structural government reforms that address policy shortcomings and the root causes of governance challenges, stagnant productivity and weak financial intermediation. This will help put the economy on a path toward productive investment, sustained growth and job creation. Develop a coordinated, comprehensive strategy to address emergency health needs, support economic activity and prepare for Pakistan's recovery. It should combine short-, medium- and long-term initiatives, prioritizing the need to preserve confidence and stability in the economy. Direct significant public resources – such as fiscal stimulus – towards strengthening the health sector and civil protection mechanisms, while supporting affected workers and economic sectors. 	Medium	High
Regional and global influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan has sheltered Afghans fleeing conflict for four decades. It currently hosts 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees (Proof of Registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a framework to analyse the links between cross-border 	Medium	Medium



Risk dimension	Brief description	Mitigation	Impact	Likelihood
	<p>(PoR) Card holders), some 840,000–880,000 Afghan Citizen Card holders and an estimated 0.4 to 0.55 million undocumented Afghans. Although exact numbers remain unknown, it is estimated that millions of stateless persons live in Karachi.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While large-scale displacements from Afghanistan are not expected, a severe economic downturn in Afghanistan due to COVID19 might increase the number of Afghan migrants to Pakistan. International tensions exist, most notably between Pakistan and India. Tensions between the two have risen since India revoked the autonomous status of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The diplomatic relationship also worsened further as both countries ejected half of each other's diplomats. Fragility in neighbouring countries affects Pakistan. As a result of the spillover of the Afghan conflict, Pakistan has been engaged in a decades-long armed struggle with militant groups, including the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and other militant networks based along the Afghan-Pakistan border. In 2009, Operation Black Thunderstorm displaced over 1.2 million people from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Newly Merged Districts, then known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Most internally displaced persons returned by 2017–2018. As of 31 December 2018, 16,064 families were registered as internally displaced, 84% of whom reside in the district of Bannu in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Sanctions, exploitation or dependencies are important regional and global influences. 	<p>infrastructure and poverty. Empirically examine how infrastructure affects or correlates to poverty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement complementary policies and investments to maximize the impact of regional infrastructure on the poor. Seek solutions for regional collaboration, dialogue and peace-building. 		
Public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 interrupted the delivery of essential health services. These include reproductive, maternal, neonatal and adolescent healthcare, as well as services to respond to communicable and non-communicable diseases.³⁹⁰ Their disruption occurred because of supply issues, such as shortages of personal protective equipment and the closure of health facilities during lockdowns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pakistan adopted several mitigation strategies to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, while making efforts to restore the delivery of essential health services. The Government of Pakistan, with assistance from partner organizations, implemented seven broad categories of mitigation measures. These were: (i) hygiene and social distancing measures; (ii) health education measures; (iii) social protection measures through a cash transfer scheme for the poorest people in the country; (iv) the 	High	High

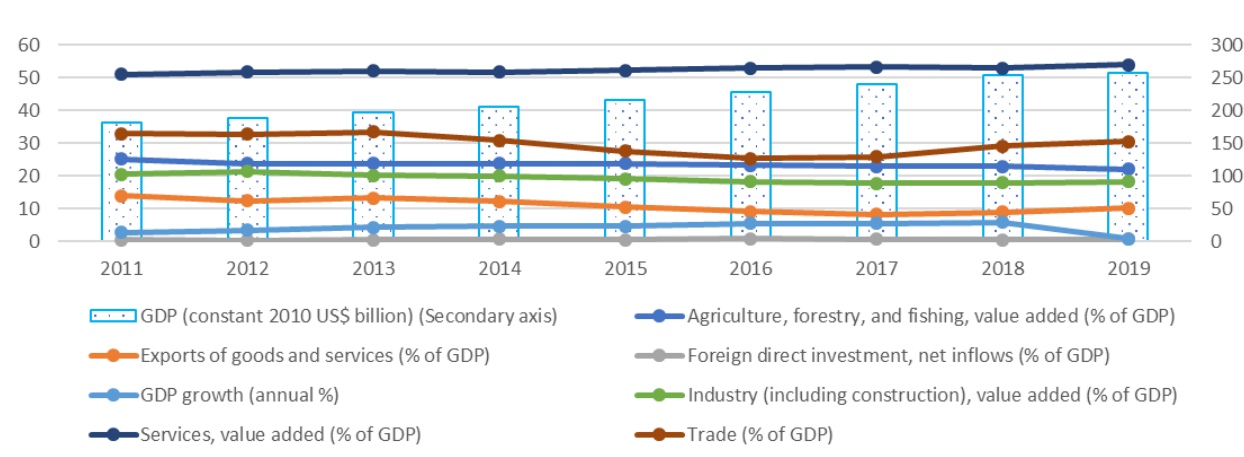


Risk dimension	Brief description	Mitigation	Impact	Likelihood
		increased provision of tele-health services; (v) increased support for community-based health services; (vi) increased human resources, task shifting and supplies for health services; and (vii) media campaigns.		

Annex VIII. Economic transformation

Pakistan's economy is the 23rd largest in the world in terms of purchasing power parity and the 42nd largest in terms of nominal gross domestic product. Services contribute more than half of the country's GDP (60%), followed by agriculture (19.3% in 2019³⁹¹) and industry/manufacturing (13%–14%). Inflows of foreign domestic investment are less than 1% of GDP. In recent decades, agriculture's contribution to GDP has gradually decreased, falling from 24% in 2011.

Annex VIII Figure 1. Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Trade

Trade in goods and services accounts for 30% of Pakistan's GDP. In 2018, the country's economy was the 69th largest in the world in terms of total exports and the 49th in total imports. In the same year, Pakistan exported goods and services worth US\$26.7 billion and imported goods and services worth US\$61.5 billion, resulting in a negative trade balance of -US\$34.8 billion. Its exports per capita were US\$126, while imports per capita were US\$290. Pakistan's trade structure has been in deficit, with exports remaining sluggish on the back of a lack of competitiveness. The trade deficit – including in services – widened to US\$32.6 billion in 2018 as imports grew much faster than exports.

Pakistan's export composition is static. Its three largest exports – textiles (mainly cotton products), leather and rice – have accounted for over 70% of total exports in the last decade. In 2018, textiles and textile articles accounted for more than 50% of total exports. The United States of America is the top destination for Pakistani exports, primarily textiles (13%), followed by China, Germany, the United Kingdom and Afghanistan, each of which accounts for 6%–7%.

As in most countries, the structure of Pakistani imports is less concentrated than that of its exports. The largest single import category is petroleum products, which account for one-quarter of total imports, followed by machinery (15%) and chemical products (10%). China is by far the largest supplier of imported goods and services in Pakistan (26%), followed by the United Arab Emirates (12%), Saudi Arabia (5%), the United States of America (4.9%) and Indonesia (4%).³⁹²

Trade in services accounts for a marginal share of Pakistan's overall trade. In 2018, it accounted for 5% of Pakistan's GDP, with imports worth US\$9.6 billion and exports worth US\$4 billion. The sub-sectors which



contribute greatly to the service sector overall include financial, construction and business services, such as computers, information technology, engineering, legal and accounting services.

In an effort to expand market access, Pakistan has been party to several preferential trade agreements (PTAs). To date, it has implemented 11 preferential trade agreements and is negotiating another 10 with its trading partners (see the box below). Its exports and imports with countries that are party to these 11 preferential trade agreements cover 32.2% of Pakistan's global exports and 45.3% of its global imports – both preferential and non-preferential.³⁹³

Annex VIII Figure 2. Pakistan's preferential trade agreements

1. Bangladesh-Pakistan (status: under negotiation; type: free trade agreement; scope: bilateral)
2. China-Pakistan (status: in force since 2007; type: free trade agreement and economic integration agreement; scope: bilateral)
3. Economic Cooperation Organisation Trade Agreement (ECOTA) (status: in force since 2008; type: partial scope agreement; scope: plurilateral)
4. Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) (status: in force since 1989; type: partial scope agreement; scope: plurilateral)
5. Group of 8 Preferential Trade Agreement (D-8 PTA) (status: in force since 2011; type: partial scope agreement; scope: plurilateral)
6. Indonesia-Pakistan (status: in force since 2013; type: partial scope agreement; scope: bilateral)
7. Malaysia-Pakistan (status: in force since 2008; type: free trade agreement and economic integration agreement; scope: bilateral)
8. Pakistan-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (status: under negotiation; type: free trade agreement; scope: country-bloc)
9. Pakistan-Iran (status: in force since 2006; type: partial scope agreement; scope: bilateral)
10. Pakistan-Mauritius (status: in force since 2007; type: partial scope agreement; scope: bilateral)
11. Pakistan-Morocco (status: under negotiation; type: partial scope agreement; scope: bilateral)
12. Pakistan-Singapore (status: under negotiation; type: free trade agreement and economic integration agreement; scope: bilateral)
13. Pakistan-Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) (status: under negotiation; type: partial scope agreement; scope: country-bloc)
14. Pakistan-Sri Lanka (status: in force since 2005; type: free trade agreement; scope: bilateral)
15. Pakistan-Thailand (status: under negotiation; type: free trade agreement and economic integration agreement; scope: bilateral)
16. Pakistan-Tunisia (status: under negotiation; type: partial scope agreement; scope: bilateral)
17. Pakistan-Turkey (status: under negotiation; type: partial scope agreement; scope: bilateral)
18. Pakistan-Viet Nam (status: under negotiation; type: free trade agreement; scope: bilateral)
19. Protocol on Trade Negotiations (PTN) (status: in force since 1973; type: partial scope agreement; scope: plurilateral)
20. South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS) (status: in force since 2006; type: free trade agreement and economic integration agreement; scope: plurilateral)
21. Trade Preferential System among the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (TPS/OIC) (status: under negotiation; type: partial scope agreement; scope: plurilateral)

Source: ESCAP, APTIAD, available at <https://aptip.org>

Trade facilitation

Pakistan is particularly concerned by trade and trade facilitation. According to the World Bank's *Doing Business Report 2020*, Pakistan ranks 108th in terms of the 'ease of doing business' and 111th in terms of 'trading across borders'. According to the most recent data available from the *UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable*



Trade Facilitation, Pakistan remains slightly below the regional and global implementation average. This indicates that significant opportunities exist for Pakistan to improve its trade facilitation mechanisms.

‘Paperless trade’ makes international trade more efficient and transparent while improving regulatory compliance, particularly if trade-related data and documents in digital form are exchanged across borders. Paperless trade may, therefore, be a solution for Pakistan’s trade facilitation needs, particularly in the context of a rapidly digitalizing global economy.

The potential benefits of cross-border paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific have been quantified in terms of cost reductions and trade gains. A study by Shepherd et al. (2014) for UNESCAP estimates that, if Pakistan achieves at least partial implementation of cross-border paperless trade, it will reduce its export/import time and costs by 47% and 51%, respectively, while boosting exports by 16% – equivalent to US\$460 million per year.³⁹⁴ A more recent study finds that, if Pakistan implements the World Trade Organization’s *Trade Facilitation Agreement* (WTO TFA) alongside cross-border paperless trade, it could reduce trade costs by 30%, over three times the 9% it would achieve through basic compliance with the *Trade Facilitation Agreement*. This amounts to potential trade transaction savings of approximately US\$550 million per year.

Pakistan has been a beneficiary country of the European Union’s Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) since 2014, which removes import duties from products coming into the EU market from selected developing countries. Participation in this trade for development facility requires compliance with and reporting on 27 international standards including the eight *Fundamental Labour Standards*. To ensure that Pakistani enterprises remain competitive, further action is required to provide an enabling environment for truly sustainable enterprises. This will help them respond to national and international market demands.

COVID-19

Economies around the world are reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including Pakistan’s. A study by UNESCAP³⁹⁵ reveals a 54% decline in Pakistani exports in 2020, as orders have been deferred or cancelled, particularly in the textile sector. Its foreign exchange remittances could decline by 22% as a result of the pandemic. To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, UNESCAP recommends a stimulus packages worth 7% of GDP to cover different needs in the spheres of public health infrastructure, social protection and economic revival.



Annex IX. Existing policies and climate change integration

Policy	Policy focus	Climate change mentioned as a risk	Possible actions for reducing risk identified	Linkages with the SDGs	Targets identified for specific adaptation measures
National Water Policy 2018	Tackling the declining supply and quality of water, water productivity, restoring/maintaining the environment and water-related ecosystems, and sustainable consumption and production patterns across all sectors	Yes; it is also aligned with the Climate Change Policy 2012	Yes	No reference made	Yes, to an extent (e.g. "at least 30% in the efficiency of water use") although it lacks guidelines on mitigating the effects of climate change
Climate Change Policy and Implementation Framework 2012	Climate change adaptation and mitigation, with a particular focus on safeguarding natural resources	Yes	Yes (policy measures included on agriculture, livestock, natural resources and climate change mitigation)	No	No
Sindh Agriculture Policy 2018–2030	Reducing food insecurity and malnutrition, promoting climate-smart, sustainable agriculture practices – including livestock breed improvement and improved seeds varieties – preparedness and contingency planning for more resilient agricultural and livestock sectors	Yes	Yes	SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 13	No
Punjab Agriculture Policy	Increasing agricultural growth, reducing poverty, combatting food insecurity and malnutrition, advancing the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources, transforming the agricultural sector and climate change adaptation	Yes	Yes	SDG 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 13, 16 and 17	No
Pakistan Vision 2025	Addressing water scarcity, climate change and food insecurity, as well as promoting inclusive economic growth and stability to foster macroeconomic stability and a 'hunger-free' Pakistan			References to the MDGs	Targets are specified for each pillar, although not categorically for climate change
National Forest Policy 2015	Expanding, protecting and ensuring the sustainable use of national forests, protected areas, natural habitats and watersheds, as well as implementing international conventions and agreements related to forestry, wetlands, biodiversity and climate change	Yes	Yes (policy measures included)	SDG 15	No



National Sustainable Development Strategy (2012)	Strategic orientation for addressing challenges associated with economic and social development, the environment and climate change	Yes	Yes	References to the MDGs	No
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Endnotes

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