

Gender Studies

Status of Women in Pakistan

1. Status of Women's health in Pakistan

Issues faced by women:

As in other south Asian countries, the situation of women's health is grim in Pakistan. The low health status of women is the result of women's lower social, economic, and cultural standing.

Bias in food distribution leads to nutritional deficiencies among female children.

Early marriages of girls, excessive childbearing, lack of control over their own bodies, and a high level of illiteracy adversely affect women's health.

Social and familial control over women's sexuality, their economic dependence on men, and restrictions on their mobility determine the access of females to health services. Gender bias within the health service delivery system in terms of lack of female service providers, and neglect of women's basic and reproductive health needs, intensify women's disadvantaged health status. In terms of seeking health for herself, a woman has no control over decision-making, difficulty in accessing health centres and discomfort with communicating with male physicians.

Stats:

Maternal mortality rate (127/10 000 live births), infant mortality rate (1/22 chances of death) Total fertility rate (3.0) are high. In terms of the Global Gender Gap 143/144. Only 60% of births are attended by healthcare professionals. Regarding family planning only 51% of married women use contraceptives. Nearly 11 000 women and girls die annually while giving birth.

Public spending on healthcare:

In 2007, public spending on health Pakistan was US\$ 64 per capita (in purchasing power parity) as compared to US\$ 109 in India, US\$ 233 in China, and US\$ 677 in Turkey. Given the low coverage of governmental health facilities, the private sector has emerged as the principal provider of health services in the country contributing to 60%–70% of the health care in Pakistan.

Policies of the Government:

In the Constitution of Pakistan, Articles 38(a), 38(d) and 25(1) refer to women's health. Pakistan has taken certain initiatives in the health sector to redress gender imbalances.

The SAP was launched in 1992–1993 to accelerate improvement in the social indicators. Closing the gender gap is the foremost objective of the SAP.

4500 lady health visitors (LHVs) are registered with the Pakistan Nursing Council backed up by a community based workforce of over 100 000 LHWs. Pakistan has also recently initiated a programme to deploy 12 000 community midwives in the rural areas. There is now an increased access to maternal, neonatal and child health and family planning services in rural communities through expansion of the LHWs cadre from 38 000 in 2001 to more than 100 000 in 2010; while about 5000 community midwives are under training before deployment in their own communities.

Other initiatives include the village-based family planning workers and extended immunisation programs, nutritional and child survival, cancer treatment, and increased involvement of media in health education.

Family Planning Policy (FP)-2020 Objectives:

1. Raising Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) from 35 percent to 55 percent by 2020.
2. The federal government will provide the amount for the contraceptive requirement as US \$186 million over the period 2013 to 2020.
3. Family planning will be a priority for LHWs, who cover 70 percent of rural areas.

2. Status of Women in Education

Women's education in Pakistan is a fundamental right of every female citizen, according to Article 37 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973.

Quaid-e-Azam Said to “The All Pakistan Educational Conference” at Karachi on 27th November 1947 “Education does not merely mean academic education and even that of a very poor type. What we have to do is to mobilize our people and build up a character of our future generation.”

According to UNDP report, Pakistan ranked 144 in 144 countries in terms of Gender-related Development Index (GDI). Women literacy at 45%.

Gender division of Labor:

Gender division of labour forces women to primarily specialize in unpaid care work as mothers and wives at home, whereas men perform paid work, and come out as breadwinners. This has led to a low level of resource investment in girls' education not only by their families but also by the state. This low investment in women's human capital, compounded by negative social biases and cultural practices, restrictions on women's mobility and the internalization of patriarchy by women themselves, becomes the basis for gender discrimination and disparities in most spheres of life. Some of the ramifications are that women are unable to develop job-market skills, hence, they have limited opportunities available to them in the wage-labour market.

Militancy problem:

Destruction of schools and killings have harmed women's education in Pakistan. In September 2012 the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* reported that 710 schools have been destroyed or damaged by militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 401 schools have been destroyed or damaged in Swat. Militant forces have also targeted girls who go to school (example of Malala).

Bad condition of School Facilities:

Many schools are in need of better facilities to improve the teaching environment. For instance, 9% of primary schools do not have a blackboard, 24% do not have textbooks available for pupils, and 46% do not have desks for their students. 48% schools in

Pakistan do not have functional toilets. only 52% of all government schools in the country have all four facilities – toilets, boundary walls, running electricity and drinking water.

Rural and Urban trends towards education:

In year 2006, the literacy rate in urban areas was recorded as 58.3% while in rural areas it was 28.3%, and only 12% among rural women. Female enrollment was recorded highest at the primary level, but it progressively decreases at the secondary, college and tertiary levels.

Comparison with boys:

According to the 2011 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program, approximately twice as many males as females receive a secondary education in Pakistan. In 2012, girls completed an average of 5.5 years of schooling compared with an overall average of 6.3 years. 48% of the poorest girls aged 5-16 are enrolled in school, compared to 68% of the poorest boys the same age. Girls make up just 42% of secondary school students, and only one in 10 will complete their secondary education. Only 68% of 15-23 year-old girls can read and write, compared with 83% of boys the same age

In Primary Public schools 56% of enrolled students are boys, and 44% are girls. In public middle schools 61%, and 39% are girls. In public high schools 61% of students are boys and 39% are girls. Overall enrollment decreases sharply at high school level. A very disproportionate gender ratio is observed in rural high schools, only 28% of the enrolled students are girls, and 72% are boys.

What is the Government doing?

The Pakistan Government has endorsed the new Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Education to ensure all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030. However, the education budget was short of \$565 million USD in order to be able to provide 12 years of education for all children in Pakistan in 2015. Public expenditures on education amount to only 2.7% of the GDP of the country.

Pakistan's Right to Education Act guarantees every child age five to 16 the right to free and compulsory education. But the Act does not cover the final two years of secondary education girls need to thrive -- and build a better future for their families, communities and country.

3. Women and Employment

The percentage of women in the labour force remains a low 26% for women ages 15-64 years, equivalent to approximately 14.4 million women. Women usually work on the farm of the household, practice subsistence agriculture, or otherwise work within the household economic unit. Women in Pakistan tend to be less "visible" with respect to their work outside the home and their contributions to household income, as well as their participation in social and political life.

Within occupations, the share of women's employment is high in the category of skilled agriculture and fishery workers (38%), professionals (30%), elementary occupations (21%) and crafts and related trades (18%). Women comprise 39% of the labour force in the agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing sector (with 73% of employed women working in this sector), 22% in the Community, social and personal services sector and 20% in Manufacturing. Within agriculture women are concentrated in animal production (47%), followed by mixed farming (23%) and growing non-perennial crops (18%)

Issues faced by women:

Research on women doing paid work in Pakistan reveals that they work out of economic need, face a hostile environment of limited employment options, unequal wages, bad work conditions, and a double burden of labour due to unremitting domestic responsibilities at home. This is true whether they perform agricultural wage labour in the rural areas or piece-rate work in the cities. Even those in the formal sector are not free from discrimination in the workplace and sexual harassment. Nonetheless they persist and their contribution to the economy has yet to be fully and correctly accounted for. Women are often prevented from advancing economically, due to social restrictions on women's movement and gender mixing, as well as due to low education.

Young girls and women are also employed in the informal domestic work sector. This makes it increasingly difficult for them to get access to better legislative protection and makes them a victim of torture and degradation. Vulnerability in employment is due to the nature of the work, the nature of the contract, and whether it is in the formal or the informal sector. 73% of all employment in Pakistan is concentrated in the informal sector a figure that is relatively unchanged over the past decade.

What is the Government Doing?

Pakistan is the signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have commitments on improving women's socio-economic conditions in the country and promote gender equality. The National Plan of Action and National Policy for Development and Women's Empowerment are consistent with international gender commitments. Legislation against gender-based violence has improved in Pakistan between 2000 and 2016. The government is committed to facilitate the women so that they can play a positive role in the development of the country and special initiatives have been taken to ensure the women empowerment. Some of the initiatives are given as under:

1. The government has launched the Youth Business Loan Scheme, with 50 percent of loans reserved for female.
2. The Punjab government has announced special budget allocations for the women's empowerment package in the provincial budget.
3. Under the Sindh Government's Landless Haris Project, of the total beneficiaries, 70.6 percent of land titles were given to women farmers.
4. The government has established a 10 percent quota for women's employment in civil service, while the Punjab Government (under the Punjab Fair Representation of Women Act 2014)
5. Women's Ombudsperson offices have been established at the federal and provincial level to ensure implementation of the protection against harassment.
6. An amount of Rs 2.7 billion has been proposed for women empowerment and their socio-economic development for the 11 Year Plan.
7. The government has also started the national women transfer scheme and Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) which facilitates women providing a monthly cash transfer to the woman head of the household.

What else can be done?

1. Enforce Article 25A, that mandates provision of free school education for ages 5-16 years across Pakistan by ensuring that infrastructure (schools, teachers, and books) is available and duty bearers are held responsible for non-compliance. Inclusive education for all should be promoted and should include skills based learning, and vocational training.
2. The government should implement the 10% quota for women in government service without further delay, and include an increase in number of women in the police force (only 1%) and allied law enforcement and female judges at all levels.
3. A study to identify the factors that lead to low recruitment of women in public service should be undertaken by UN Women.
4. Legislation to recognize home based workers and bring them within the ambit of labour laws and social security.
5. Incentives should be offered that reward businesses which employ a certain percentage women, have women in senior decision making management positions, or are owned by women.
6. The government should also support the First Women's Bank, a public sector institution created for helping women's economic activities, to fulfill its mandate.

4. Women and Law

Since independence Pakistan has formulated Laws to protect women and to give them security. At time of foundation, there was little legal distinction between the rights that women and men enjoyed

The Constitution of Pakistan thus says: There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex along;Steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all spheres of national life; the state shall protect the marriage, the family, the mother and the child. At the provincial level also, the 18th amendment to the Constitution (2010) granted greater autonomy to the provinces in matters related to the advancement of women along with other issues. But, like other social sectors of Pakistan, the perennial problem of policy implementation has also plagued this sector.

At official level, the following Laws have been adopted in Pakistan to safeguard women:

1. Muslim family Laws Ordinance (MFLO) of 1961.
2. The West Pakistan Family Courts Act of 1964.

3. Dowry and Bridal Gifts Restriction Act, 1976.
4. Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2004.
5. Protection of Women Act (2006)20, revised the Hudood Ordinance.
6. Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2010 (on sexual harassment).
7. Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace, 2010.
8. Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act, 2011.21
9. Criminal Law Act (Second Amendment, 2011), referred as Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act.
10. Criminal Law Act (Third Amendment, 2011), referred to as Prevention of Anti-Women Practices.
11. The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act, 2011
12. Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection), Act 2012
13. National Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2012
14. Enforcement of Women Ownership Rights Act 2012.
15. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elimination of Custom of Ghag Act 2013.
16. Acid victims Act, Honor killing Act and Women's Protection Act.

In addition, Pakistan has been party to various international and regional conventions for protecting women and giving them equal status. Pakistan is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Unfortunately, the radicalization of the State has divested the country of an environment which is required for the actual implementation of these various legislations and, in turn, to protect the female population. Most of these laws remain on paper, as the country's enforcement apparatus remains, on the one hand, stretched to its limited dealing with a deluge of terrorism and enveloping crime, and, on the other, indifferent to the plight of women within a society that remains parochial and deeply committed to a religious and political ideology that denies equality to women and seeks to exclude them from the public sphere (Bhattacharya, 2013).