

Child Education

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Education is very essential for the progress of any country and the success of a nation stands on quality education. Pakistan is a country where the educational condition is not satisfactory, and this is the reason that Pakistan ranks second in terms of the number of out-of-school children in the world, only after Nigeria.

The status of government schools is not good, because Pakistan is spending only 2.6 to 2.3 percent of its GNP (gross national product) on them. Other reasons for the failure in the educational system include lack of interest in education in rural areas because of poverty and low awareness. Pakistani society has a mix of different cultures, and some cultures neglect education, especially for girls.

The picture of illiteracy in Pakistan is grim. Although successive governments have announced various programs to promote literacy, especially among women, they have been unable to translate their words into action because of various political, social and cultural obstacles.

Official statistics released by the Federal Education Ministry of Pakistan give a desperate picture of education for all, especially girls. The overall literacy rate is

60 percent, while only 46 percent of female are literate. The situation is especially alarming in rural areas due to social and cultural obstacles. One of the most deplorable aspects is that in some places, particularly northern tribal areas, the education of girls is strictly prohibited on religious grounds.

This is a gross misinterpretation of Islam, the dominant religion in Pakistan (96 percent of the population), which, like all religions, urges men and women to acquire education.

As we have seen, the literacy rate of women is only 46 percent in Pakistan. The Article 25-A of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan ensures free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 5 to 16 years, and provinces are making some progress towards its implementation. Because of the high population growth rate and low expenditure on education, the shift in the average level of adult literacy has been slow, from 26 percent in 1981 to an estimated 57.7 percent in 2010. This figure is



20 million children are not enrolled in school in Pakistan.

the average between urban and rural areas, male and female, and different provinces. The rate of literacy for rural females in 2010 was only 22.5% in Baluchistan, 20.3% in Sindh, 29% in Khaiber Pakhtunkhwa, and 40% in Punjab.

The parents in rural areas are mostly interested in sending boys to any technical workshops for earning, while girls are made to stay home for domestic work. The reason for not sending girls to school is that they are forced into child marriages, and into domestic work. In terms of the concept of public and private, girls are regarded as domestic workers and boys as breadwinners. The patriarchal structures do not allow girls to go to school, college or university, because they have strong command over girls' basic rights. The cases of violence are happening a lot, because women are less strong than men.



Lack of equipment and basic needs in schools

The new Pakistani government, media, civil society and the youth are very interested in improving the overall status of child education in the country, and different political parties are making proposals for increasing budgets for education from 2% to 7%. Now the entire Pakistani society is showing interest in education, and parents are beginning to send their children to school even in rural areas. After a lot of work on the ground by the government, civil society, and humanitarian organizations, girls are also starting to receive technical and academic education across the country. Alif Ailaan, a civil campaign, was launched in the whole country for the promotion of education, especially the implementation of the Article 25-A (free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 5 to 16 years).

The foremost benchmark must be the provision of the constitution which ensures that every child in our country is entitled to a good education. Determined efforts are needed to overcome the following barriers to the goal; lack of awareness, lack of resources, the government's ineptitude, corruption, political interference, patronage towards insufficient and unqualified teachers who neglect to work, poor-quality facilities and

teachers, inequality in education (i.e. between urban and rural areas, between males and females, and among different provinces), the low income level of lower-middle-class families that makes it harder for their children to receive good education, low awareness of the people in general as well as the parents in particular to education.

Therefore, it is necessary for all the children to get good education without any gender-based discrimination so that they can play their parts for the development and prosperity of the country.