

## **Female Education in Rural Areas of Pakistan: Barriers and Dreams of Parents**

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Education is the key to success. Education also helps empower people and it is true that knowledge is gained from nature and nurture. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world with the 44<sup>th</sup> largest economy (GDP). Around 61% of the population in Pakistan lives in rural areas, of which 50% are female, but unfortunately, they are the most deprived by all factors of basic life necessities. According to the Pakistan Education Statistic report, out of the country's population of 200 million, 22.84 million children, of which 60% are female, are not in school. This is the second highest figure globally after Nigeria. Only 612,531 girls are enrolled in education at the higher secondary level. 32% of primary school-age girls are out of school, compared with 21% of boys.

### **Barriers to female education in rural areas**

There are several barriers to female education, especially in rural areas, e.g. gender inequality, racism, lack of resources, long distances, physical weakness, and cultural, religious and financial constraints. Due to less resources and mismanagement of available sources, the public faces a lack of schools, high fees for private schools and related costs, failure to enforce compulsory education, poor quality infrastructure and education in schools, teachers' absences, lack of qualified teachers and other issues, including difficulties in sending girls to schools because of external factors, such as child labor, gender discrimination, child marriage, sexual harassment, insecurity and attacks on schools.

### **Pakistan investment in education**

The GDP of Pakistan makes it the world's 44<sup>th</sup> largest economy, according to the Human Rights Watch report of 2018. Goal 4 in the UNDP SDGs 2030 goals recommends that 4-6% of a country's GDP be spent for education. Pakistan has invested less than 2.8% of its GDP, which is far below the recommended percentage. There are few government schools in major cities and the situation is far worse in rural vicinities. In the present situation, there are lower number of high schools than lower grade schools and there are even fewer higher educational institutions, especially for girls. If one girl completed her education at a local school in a rural area, she may not be able to move up to the next level due to long distance or some other reason. Due to this basis private schools have seen massive growth but their fees are not affordable for lower income families. Although many of them are low-cost but have poor quality of education with very less facilities like, suitable libraries, computer labs, wash rooms, broken chairs etc.

### **Dreams of Parents and Girls**

In fact, all parents want their children to be highly educated and have bright futures, but there is no state system in place to deliver services efficiently. Numbers of schools for boys are double that of girls, which is a dilemma for the socio-economic development of Pakistan. A large number of under-age children that is mostly female have no secure access to proceed to school for one reason or other. The poor parents in rural areas cannot afford to pay high fees or transport fares for their children in upper-grade schools, which are mostly located a distance away from their residences. As a result, the lofty dreams of parents and children remain quashed till death. According to a mother, "The school may be free, but there are demands to pay for copies, stationery, and various fines of teachers on daily basis. The price of a school bag is more than Rs. 500/- (US\$3.67) which is equal to our two-day income. So, how can we educate our children?" In addition, it is generally observed that in mostly government owned schools, teachers demand for payment from students on the name of various requirements like fines on absentee, repairing of classrooms, exam papers, water facilities etc. but the higher authority is taking no action against culprits.

### **Suggestions to overcome problems**

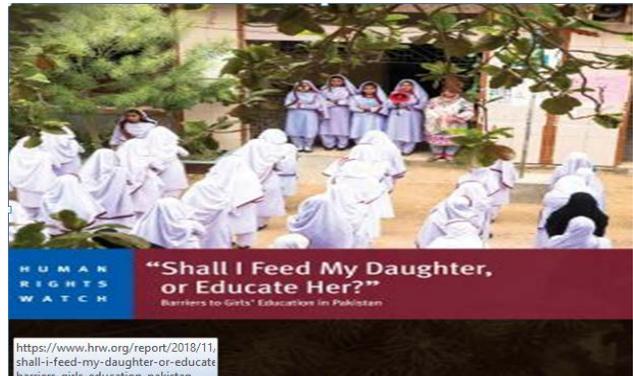
Women are considered to be an essential and necessary segment of society and play a central role in the socio-economic development of the country. To achieve this purpose, women should be equally educated

and empowered to build a better nation. Therefore, the Pakistani government should adopt such policies to create pioneering solutions to facilitate the access of women in rural areas to education, as well as urban areas.

The new political government of Pakistan's ruling party, Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaf (PTI), was elected in August 2018, and the party's manifesto promises huge reforms in the educational system. They intend to upgrade girls' schools, improve the quality of schools, provide stipends annually to girls, provide technology equipment, establish cadet colleges, transportation facilities, and vocational and special education centers, as well as other possible amenities. These are positive steps which will give hope for a bright future to every Pakistani girl living in all segments of the country, both urban and rural.



Village girls reading on the ground in a Government Primary School  
(<http://elections.alifailan.ptextbooks-the-real-culprit/>)



"Shall I Feed My Daughter, or Educate her? "Barriers to Girls' Education in Pakistan by Human Rights Watch

Links:

1. [http://unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT\\_PK\\_SDG-4\\_Gap\\_Analysis.pdf](http://unesco.org.pk/education/documents/2018/DRAFT_PK_SDG-4_Gap_Analysis.pdf)
2. <http://edugrid.pk/girls-education-in-the-rural-areas-of-pakistan/>
3. <http://elections.alifailan.ptextbooks-the-real-culprit/>
4. <https://www.hrw.org/new/2018/11/13/creating-neighborhood-schools-pakistan>