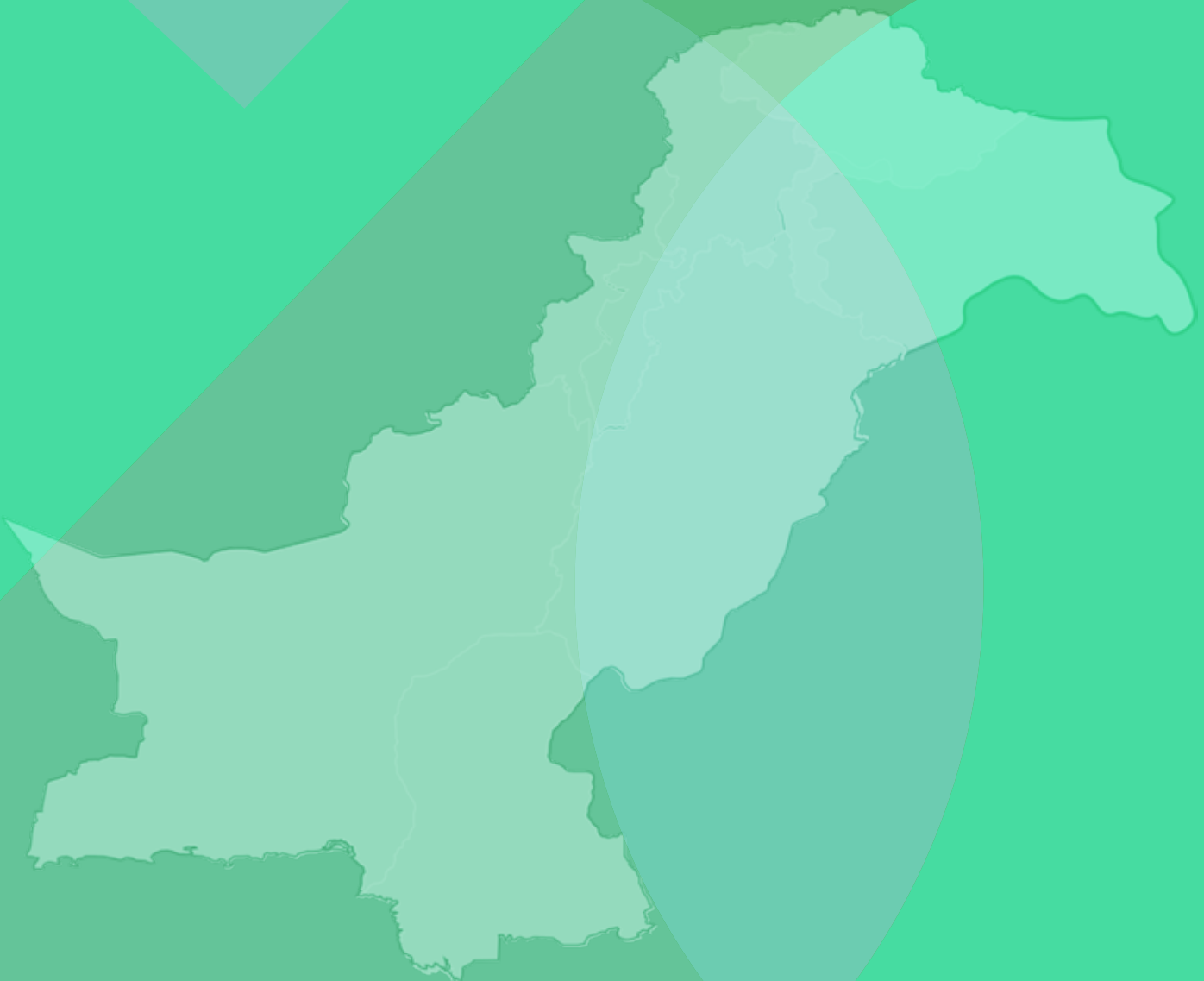




VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REPORT ON ICPD PROGRESS IN PAKISTAN

2023



VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REPORT ON ICPD PROGRESS IN PAKISTAN

2023



Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives,
Govt. of Pakistan with assistance from
United Nations Population Fund, Pakistan
July 2023



DISCLAIMER:

The Federal Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Government of Pakistan is the sole custodian of this report while UNFPA has provided technical and financial support in its development.

Technical Advisory Team

- Mr Shakeel Ahmed, Chief Population, Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Govt. of Pakistan
- Mr Syed Kazim Salman, Deputy Chief Population, Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Govt. of Pakistan
- Ms Rubina Ali, Assistant Representative, UNFPA Pakistan
- Mr Muqaddar Shah, Program Analyst (Population & Development), UNFPA Pakistan

Consultants

- Tauseef Ahmed PhD

Tauseef Ahmed has a PhD in Sociology and has worked extensively in the area of Population and Development over the last 32 years.

- Dr Jasim Anwar

Dr Jasim Anwar is an international development consultant and an applied scientist specialised in Policy Formulation, Strategic and Sustainable Development, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, Mortality Estimations, Health Information Systems, and Demography. He has over 20 years of experience. He is qualified with an MBBS, and a Master in Applied Sciences from the University of Sydney, and a PhD from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

Citation

Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Report on Voluntary National Survey for Monitoring Progress in Asia and the Pacific towards implementing 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development – Progress, Achievements, and Challenges. Govt. of Pakistan. Islamabad. July 2023

© 2023 MoPD&SI, ICT, Government of Pakistan.

This report, or any part of it, may not be reproduced in any form, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission of the MoPD&SI, Govt. of Pakistan.

Abbreviations

APMD	Asia Pacific Ministerial Declaration
BISP	Benazir Income Support Program
CEWG	Country Engagement Working Group
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CCPD	Climate Change–Population–Development
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
DKT	Das Kaufmännische Talent
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.
FP	Family Planning
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NSER	National Socioeconomic Registry
PDHS	Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey
PSLM	Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	15
1.1 Demographic and Population Situation of Pakistan	17
1.2 Status of Maternal and Reproductive Health in Pakistan	18
1.3 State of Education	20
1.4 Analysis of Financing Family Planning Activities in Pakistan	21
2. Methods	26
2.1 Methods	27
3. Monitoring Progress and Challenges of APMD Priority Areas	30
3.1 Poverty Eradication and Employment	31
3.2 Health	33
3.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights	34
3.4 Education	38
3.5 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	40
3.6 Adolescents and Young People	43
3.7 Urbanization and Internal Migration	45
3.8 International Migration	47
3.9 Population and Sustainable Development	49
3.10 Data and Statistics	52
3.11 Ageing	55
3.12 Food security	57
3.13 Climate Change	58
3.14 Factors that Contribute to the Successes of Pakistan's APMD Priority Areas	61
4. Conclusions and Recommendations	66
4.1 Conclusions	66
5. Recommendations	71
5.1 Poverty Eradication and Employment	71
5.2 Health	71
5.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	73
5.4 Education	74
5.5 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	74
5.6 Adolescents and Young People	75
5.7 Urbanization and Internal Migration	76
5.8 International Migration	77
5.9 Population and sustainable development	77
5.10 Data and Statistics	78
5.11 Ageing	79
5.12 Food Security	80
5.13 Digital Transformation	80
Annexes	82

List of Tables

Table 1. Population Size of Pakistan and Provinces and Estimated Change	19
Table 2. Trends of important Demographic, Health and Social Indicators – Pakistan and Provinces	21
Table 3. Trends of important Contraceptive Prevalence Rate and Unmet Need for FP – Pakistan and Provinces	21
Table 4. Per cent distribution of the de facto household population age five and over	22
Table 5. Trends of Selected Education Sector Indicators – Pakistan and Provinces	23
Table 6. Trend of Percent of Total Expenditure by Stakeholders by Salary / Non-Salary components	25
Table 7. Schedule of Consultative and Validation Workshops on ICPD Voluntary National Survey, Pakistan 2023	30
Table 8. Province wise initiatives for Poverty Eradication and Employment in Pakistan (2013-23)	33
Table 9. Province-wise Initiatives for Health in Pakistan (2013-23)	35
Table 10. Province wise initiatives for Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights in Pakistan (2013-23)	38
Table 11. Province wise initiatives for Gender Equality & Women Empowerment in Pakistan (2013-23)	43
Table 12. Province wise initiatives for Urbanization & Internal Migration in Pakistan (2013-23)	48
Table 13. Province wise initiatives for Population and Sustainable Development in Pakistan (2013-23)	52
Table 14. Province wise initiatives for Senior Citizens in Pakistan (2013-23)	58

List of Figures

Figure 1. Per cent of Total Expenditure by Key Stakeholders during 2018–19 and 2021–22	24
Figure 2. Process of Conducting National Voluntary Survey – Pakistan 2023	28
Figure 3. APMD Priorities Areas and their relationship with SDGs	29

List of Annexes

Annex I. List of Provincial and National Workshops Participants and Contributors to the Consultation Process	85
Annex II. A Glimpse of Provincial & National Workshop	91

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend special thanks to federal Secretary Syed Zafar Ali Shah, Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, for his exceptional leadership and guidance. We also thank Secretary Iftikhar Ali Shallwani from the Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination for his continuous support and commitment. We acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by Shakeel Ahmed, Chief Population and Social Planning, and Mr Kazim Salman, Deputy Chief Population and Social Planning, Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Govt. of Pakistan.

The ministry would like to express its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the officials from the Planning and Development Departments of all provinces for their support in the entire consultative process. We would like to thank Mr Kamran Rehman Khan, Add Secretary, and Dr Sabina Durrani, Director General Population Program Wing, Ministry of National Health Services Regulation & Coordination, for their significant contributions. The participation and support of all provincial Secretaries of Population Welfare Departments have been greatly appreciated.

We sincerely thank Dr Rubaba Buledi, Parliamentary Secretary for Law & Science & Technology, Mr Qasim Soomro, Parliamentary Secretary on Health, Government of Sindh, and Dr Talib Lashari, Technical Advisor on Family Planning, Government of Sindh, for their participation in the consultative workshops and their continued support. We appreciate the support of Mr Hafiz Abdul Basit, Additional Chief Secretary (Dev.), Mr Abdullah Khan, Secretary, Population Welfare Department, and Mr Arif Achakzai, Chief Foreign Aid, Govt. of Balochistan, for their valuable contributions.

The ministry also thanks to Dr Tauseef Ahmed and Dr Jasim Anwar, Consultants to the Ministry of Planning and Development and Special Initiatives (MoPD&SI), for organising the consultative process and preparing the report based on reviews of documents and feedback during the consultative process. The support and contribution of all participants in the six workshops (organised to support the consultative process) are highly commendable.

Finally, the Ministry of Planning and Development & Special Initiatives would like to extend special thanks to Dr Luay Shabane, Country Representative of UNFPA Pakistan, for his exceptional leadership and UNFPA's continued assistance to the Government of Pakistan in implementing the Plan of Action following the International Conference on Population and Development and preparation of this report. Sincere appreciation to the UNFPA team, especially Dr Rubina Ali, Assistant Representative; Mr Muqaddar Shah, Program Analyst (Population & Development); Ms Bayramgul, Head of the Office Sindh; Mr Shoaib Ahmed, Head of the Office Punjab; Ms Mahjabeen Qazi Head of the Office Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr Sarmad Khan, Head of the Office Balochistan, and Ms Hasina Bano, Program Associate for their unwavering support and dedication in the entire process.

Dr Rafiullah Kakar

Member Social Sector & Devolution

Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives

Islamabad

Preface

Pakistan and 178 other countries adopted the International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action (ICPD PoA) in 1994. The ICPD Program of Action recognised the interconnectedness between population, development, and individual well-being to promote sustainable development. Progress reviews after every five years at international and regional levels provide an opportunity to update the framework, enhance understanding of inter-linkages, and resolve actions.

During the regional 20-year review of the ICPD PoA, held in Bangkok in 2013, 47 member countries in the Asia-Pacific region (ESCAP) adopted the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development. The declaration affirmed the ICPD Program of Action and emphasised the need to accelerate progress towards achieving its goals, particularly in sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, and population dynamics. The Ministerial Declaration identified 11 priorities for member countries to focus on to achieve population and development goals.

Pakistan as a signatory to the ICPD Program of Action and 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration (APMD), recognises the importance of addressing the challenges such as high maternal mortality, access to family planning services, gender-based violence, and access to quality education among others). It is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 3 on good health and wellbeing.

Pakistan has made commendable progress in implementing the ICPD Program of Action in various reproductive health indicators. However, the momentum towards these goals has been slow, resulting in the distant realisation of the ICPD goals for millions of women and girls in Pakistan. National and sub-national stakeholder consultations were organised in May 2023 to seek perspectives and insights on progress made at various levels, identify gaps and challenges, and develop actionable recommendations to accelerate the Promise for Pakistan and improve implementation.

The successful completion of the Stakeholders' meetings across Pakistan, spearheaded by the Ministry of Planning and Development and Special Initiatives, demonstrates a commitment to engage all stakeholders and evolve joint strategies to address the challenges. These stakeholder consultations proved highly productive with government officials, civil society representatives, and other participants, shedding light on achievements within their domain and identifying areas requiring further attention on the 11 priorities outlined in the ministerial declaration. The report provides a comprehensive overview of progress, challenges and recommendations to promote inclusive and sustainable development by adopting an integrated approach.

To ensure an inclusive consultation process, a wide range of stakeholders, including government ministries, line departments, civil societies, non-government organisations, UN organisations, and academia, were engaged in the process of completing the Voluntary National Survey on ICPD. Consultative workshops were organised in each province, followed by a national workshop and, finally, a validation meeting to develop consensus on achievements, challenges, and recommendations around the priority areas of the ICPD Plan of Action.

In conclusion, Pakistan acknowledges that effectively addressing high population growth requires a multi-sectoral approach and goes beyond the scope of a single sector or department. The importance of inter-ministerial coordination cannot be overstated, as it plays a pivotal role in overcoming the challenges associated with implementing a comprehensive and integrated strategy. Collaborative efforts among all relevant departments are indispensable in tackling the issue of high population growth. Looking ahead, Pakistan eagerly anticipates sharing the remarkable progress achieved over the last decade and will actively participate in the ICPD30+ Review Meeting in 2024. This significant event will provide a platform to address emerging issues, including ageing, and digital transformation, focusing on eHealth initiatives, food security, and climate change, further advancing the population and development agendas.

Executive Summary

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in 1994 marked a significant shift in the approach towards population, development, and reproductive health issues. The ICPD's Program of Action emphasised a human rights framework, focusing on women's access to reproductive and sexual healthcare and their ability to control their pregnancies. The goals of the Program of Action were to prioritise individual rights and recognise human beings at the center of sustainable development efforts. The ICPD's progress is regularly assessed through comprehensive reviews conducted every five years, ensuring that the goals remain relevant and effective. The ICPD Beyond 2014 (ICPD+20) special session commemorated the 20th anniversary and charted a path forward for continued progress.

The Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development adopted during the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in 2013 affirmed the ICPD goals and called for accelerated progress in sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, and population dynamics. The declaration

identified 11 priorities, including poverty eradication, health, sexual and reproductive health, education, gender equality, and population and sustainable development. Pakistan is committed to achieving the ICPD and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite progress in maternal health and contraceptive use, challenges remain in addressing high maternal mortality, unmet need for contraception, and gender disparities in education.

The voluntary national survey on the International Conference on Population and Development in Pakistan was conducted in 2023 using a multi-pronged approach, incorporating primary and secondary sources of information gathered through four provincial and national consultative workshops. These workshops captured achievements, challenges, and recommendations related to the ICPD's areas of action including poverty eradication and employment, health, sexual and reproductive health, education, gender equality, international migration, and internal migration and urbanisation, population and sustainable development, ageing, data and statistics, climate change, food security, digital transformation.

Poverty Eradication and Employment



Pakistan has achieved significant milestones in poverty eradication and employment generation through various initiatives and policies. Multidimensional poverty has declined from 55 per cent to 39 per cent between 2011-12 and 2018-19, attributed to efforts in social protection, cash transfer programs, rural development, and skill enhancement. Public-private partnerships and the growth of the Information Technology sector have also played crucial roles in generating employment opportunities. However, challenges remain, including high population growth, informal sector employment, skills mismatch, gender disparities, and rural-urban disparities, hindering comprehensive poverty eradication efforts. Limited resources, capacity constraints, lack of disaggregated data, and inconsistent political support further added to the challenges, requiring coordinated and sustained efforts to address poverty and employment issues effectively. Pakistan faces challenges in formalising the informal sector, addressing gender disparities, improving rural access to services and markets, and bridging skills gaps.

In the realm of poverty eradication and employment, creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises becomes essential to generate employment opportunities. Political leadership needs to build consensus and commit to poverty eradication and employment as a national priority, with sustained efforts and necessary resources. Allocating financial resources through innovative funding mechanisms and engaging in public-private partnerships, along with international support, will enable comprehensive poverty eradication and employment initiatives. Implementing targeted poverty alleviation programs, such as cash transfer schemes combined with skill development initiatives, will provide support to vulnerable populations, empowering them to lift themselves out of poverty. Strengthening disaster preparedness and response mechanisms is essential to ensure that poverty eradication and employment efforts continue even during emergencies, safeguarding the progress made.



Education

In the education sector, Pakistan has made substantial advancements, with improved primary and secondary school completion rates, net attendance ratios, and net enrollment rates. Efforts to achieve universal primary education and promote gender equality have yielded positive outcomes. Teacher training, infrastructure development, and data collection and monitoring systems have also received considerable attention, enhancing the quality of education.

Prioritising education and literacy initiatives will empower individuals and foster informed decision-making, promoting sustainable development. The education sector requires increased funds and a focus on the quality and quantity of teachers, especially in rural areas. Ensuring adequate infrastructure, promoting girls' education, and improving data collection mechanisms are essential for sustainable development. Encouraging public awareness and community involvement in educational initiatives needs to be prioritised.



Health

In the healthcare sector, Pakistan has achieved significant milestones, including increased immunisation coverage, progress in polio eradication, and improvements in maternal and child health. However, challenges persist, such as limited access to quality healthcare services in remote areas, insufficient healthcare infrastructure and human resources, low healthcare expenditure, and inadequate control of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Addressing these challenges and sustaining progress will require increased investment in healthcare, a focus on preventive measures, and enhanced governance and accountability in the sector.

Addressing health challenges necessitates enhancing GDP allocations to healthcare, especially in underserved areas. Improving primary healthcare services, including maternal and child healthcare and disease prevention, is

crucial. Efforts should be directed at reducing disparities in maternal health outcomes and ensuring equitable access to quality services. Promoting health education and awareness campaigns and addressing the shortage of healthcare professionals are necessary measures. Improving healthcare infrastructure, especially in underserved areas, is a key focus to enhance access to quality healthcare services. Pakistan needs to strengthen the capacity of healthcare delivery systems and relevant institutions for effective program implementation and performance monitoring. This weak area requires Pakistan to train healthcare workers, enhance managerial and technical skills, improve infrastructure, and strengthen health information systems. Building a competent and resilient healthcare workforce is crucial for delivering quality health services.



Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights

Pakistan has also made notable progress in Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights (SRHR), particularly in maternal health and family planning. The country has focused on safe deliveries and maternal care, leading to a decline in maternal deaths. Family planning services have been expanded, and the availability of long-acting methods and self-care injections has provided greater choice to women for birth spacing. Policies and laws, such as the provincial Population Policy documents and Reproductive Health Strategy 2017-2022, support SRHR

and emphasise access to quality reproductive health services. In SRHR, equitable access to services, integration of family planning, IEC activities, and inconsistent political support are challenges that require attention.

Pakistan must invest in family planning, enhance the Lady Health Worker Program, and increase the overall budget allocation for reproductive health programs. Strengthening the capacity of healthcare providers to deliver quality services and promoting gender-sensitive approaches

to reproductive health are essential steps. Coordinating efforts among departments and raising awareness about sexual and reproductive health rights will help address challenges. Improving data collection systems

will provide valuable insights through sex-disaggregated data, supporting the effective implementation of women empowerment laws.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment



In promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, Pakistan has made progress through legislative reforms, policies, and programs. The National Gender Policy Framework and provincial policies have played a crucial role in mainstreaming gender equality across sectors. Legislative reforms have addressed issues like violence against women and workplace harassment. Efforts to improve education, skills development, and economic empowerment have led to increased women's participation in the labor force and educational attainment. Gender disparities, early marriages, gender-based violence, and limited job opportunities continue to pose obstacles in achieving full gender equality.

For gender equality and women's empowerment, establishing or strengthening institutions overseeing and implementing women empowerment laws and policies will ensure their effective enforcement. Providing training and capacity-building programs for government officials and law enforcement agencies will enhance their understanding of women's rights and the significance of their implementation. Promoting women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and skills development will foster gender equality and drive economic growth.

Adolescents and Youth



Empowering adolescents and young people has been a focus for Pakistan through initiatives like the Prime Minister's Youth Program, National Vocational and Technical Training Commission, and Startup Pakistan. Efforts have been made to establish youth-friendly health services and utilise digital platforms for information dissemination. Promoting youth empowerment and participation in decision-making processes at all levels

will harness the potential of the younger generation. Providing Life Skill-Based Education and youth-friendly healthcare services will equip young people with essential skills and knowledge to lead healthier lives. Implementing gender-sensitive approaches will address the specific needs of young women and girls, ensuring their equal participation and opportunities in society.

Internal Migration and Urbanization



Pakistan has experienced substantial urbanization and internal migration over the past decade, with a growing number of people moving from rural to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities, education, and improved living standards; pressure on basic amenities remains high. Over the years, Pakistan has undertaken

successful initiatives, including the Orangi Pilot Project, low-cost housing schemes, development of mass transit systems, land regularization programs and urban infrastructure development projects have improved urban living conditions. Rapid urbanisation stresses existing infrastructure, leading to deficits in housing, transportation,

and essential services. Weak urban governance and limited resources hinder effective urban management.

Urbanisation and internal migration challenges can be addressed through comprehensive urban planning strategies, strengthening local government institutions, and promoting sustainable urban development practices. Modernising urban land management and integrating climate change adaptation and disaster resilience will enhance urban planning. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic and integrated approach, including improved urban planning, enhanced institutional capacity, targeted investment in urban infrastructure, and inclusive policies prioritising marginalised populations' needs.

It also requires coordination and collaboration among stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organisations, and development partners, to achieve sustainable and inclusive urban development in Pakistan. By prioritising the needs of planned urban development, promoting inclusive policies, and adopting sustainable urban practices, Pakistan can progress in achieving sustainable and liveable cities. Promoting sustainable urban development practices, including affordable housing and efficient public transportation systems, will enhance living standards in urban areas. Strengthening urban areas' governance and institutional management capacities at the local level will ensure effective management and service delivery.

International Migration



Recognising the importance of international migration, Pakistan has made efforts to safeguard the rights and well-being of migrants, harness positive impacts, and effectively manage demographic changes. Skilled migrants returning to Pakistan contribute valuable knowledge and skills, and legislation like the Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act, 2018, reflects Pakistan's commitment to combating irregular migration and protecting migrants' rights. Pakistan needs to strengthen migration governance

and legal frameworks and expand legal channels for migration. Developing comprehensive policies and legal frameworks will protect migrants' rights and ensure access to basic services. Expanding legal channels for migration will provide safe options for individuals seeking to migrate and contribute positively to destination countries. Providing support and services to returning migrants, including reintegration programs and skills training, will assist them in building a better life in their home country.

Population and Sustainable Development



Pakistan's strategic approach to population management and sustainable development has led to commendable achievements, integrating population dynamics, reproductive health, and gender equality into development plans. Investments in infrastructure and energy projects under the CPEC initiative have promoted industrial growth and uplifted less-developed regions. The National Action Plan for Population 2018–24 emphasises family planning, maternal and child healthcare, showcasing Pakistan's commitment to sustainability.

Despite strategic advancements, Pakistan faces challenges in population management and sustainable development,

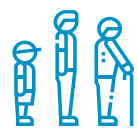
requiring increased investment and comprehensive policies. In terms of population and sustainable development, prioritising education and healthcare and integrating population dynamics into national development planning are essential. Improving access to reproductive health services and family planning is crucial, as well as promoting sustainable development practices and renewable energy. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive and integrated approaches prioritising investments in healthcare, education, women's empowerment, infrastructure development, poverty reduction, and data collection systems.



Data and Statistics

Data and statistics have seen significant advancements in Pakistan, leading to evidence-based decision-making and informed policy formulation. The establishment of national-level data collection systems, such as PDHS, PSLM, and MICS, has provided valuable information on population dynamics, health indicators, and socio-economic factors. Data and statistics need further strengthening, including capacity-building, resource allocation, data sharing, and improved civil registration

and vital statistics. Lastly, improving data and statistics capabilities is necessary for evidence-based policymaking and monitoring progress. Strengthening national statistical systems and fostering collaboration among stakeholders will improve data collection, analysis, and utilisation. Establishing mechanisms for inter-ministerial coordination on data and statistics is vital for effective planning and decision-making.



Ageing

Pakistan has also made progress in addressing the needs of its ageing population through various legislation and policies. Acts such as the ICT Maintenance and Welfare of Old Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2019 and Senior Citizen Acts at federal and provincial levels demonstrate

the government's commitment to protecting the rights and well-being of older individuals. Challenges in addressing the needs of the ageing population include limited age-friendly services, potential labour shortages, changing family dynamics, and inadequate data for policymaking.

Food Security



Food security has been a priority for Pakistan, and efforts have been made to address challenges, including the formulation of a National Food Security Policy, implementation of agricultural development programs, and promotion of climate-smart agriculture. Addressing food security challenges requires investment in agricultural research and development, climate-smart agriculture practices, and market infrastructure development.

Collaboration among stakeholders is essential to ensure long-term food security. Improving agricultural practices and providing support to small-scale farmers will enhance productivity and resilience. Strengthening storage and distribution infrastructure and investing in irrigation systems will reduce post-harvest losses and mitigate the impact of climate change.

Climate Change



Pakistan ranks among the top 10 countries most affected by climate change and extreme weather events, underscoring the urgent need for prioritizing adaptation and resilience, including severe heat waves, recurrent flooding, frequent and intense droughts, irregular and unpredictable rainfall, adverse affects on agriculture

production thus negatively affecting livelihoods and economic opportunities, contributed to the spread of waterborne diseases, and vector-borne diseases, and all have implications for ecosystem health, biodiversity. These impacts highlight the multifaceted tasks Pakistan faces due to climate change. They affect various sectors

of the economy, social well-being, and environmental sustainability. Therefore, Pakistan's context aligns with the Climate Change-Population-Development (CCPD) linkages Framework as it recognises the need to address climate change, population dynamics, and sustainable development holistically and integrated. Efforts in Pakistan should involve strategies and policies that consider the

interconnections between these factors to promote resilience, mitigate climate change impacts, and achieve sustainable development goals. Addressing climate change challenges requires preparedness for heat-related illnesses, waterborne diseases, and food security issues. Societal-level mobilisation is crucial to protect vulnerable populations and secure scarce resources.

Digital Transformation



To keep pace with digital transformation, Pakistan needs to expand access to digital technologies and infrastructure, especially in rural areas. Strengthening cybersecurity and data protection regulations is crucial to safeguard privacy and prevent cybercrime. Promoting digital literacy

programs for all population segments, including women and marginalised groups, will enhance digital skills. Public-private partnerships will foster innovation in various sectors, including e-commerce, digital financial services, and telemedicine.



01 Introduction

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 brought together representatives from 179 countries to discuss population, development, and reproductive health issues, focusing on promoting human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development. The ICPD gave a 20-year vision for addressing low development, population and health indicators as a Program of Action recognising the interlinkages between population, poverty alleviation, environment, sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

A significant shift in the population debate occurred with the ICPD Programme of Action's human rights framework replacing a macroeconomics perspective with a focus on woman's access to appropriate reproductive and sexual health care (within a functioning health system) and their ability to control the timing of their pregnancies. The advancement in the human rights perspective on reproductive health, along with a more focused discussion on gender roles in development, marked a major step forward for the population debate at that time. The Conference also accepted (however provisionally) estimates of resource requirements for a core programme package and defined the contributions of donor and developing countries while emphasising the need for strengthened international, regional, and national partnerships.

The foremost objective of the Program of Action was to prioritise the needs, aspirations, and rights of individual women and men and recognise human beings at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. Reproductive health, rights, women's empowerment, and gender equality were identified as cornerstones of population and development. The comprehensive framework was evolved for addressing population and development issues which recognised the importance of addressing the rights and needs of individuals and promoting sustainable development with a focus on gender equality, reproductive health and rights, and the empowerment of women and girls. The progress of the ICPD Program of Action is regularly assessed through comprehensive reviews conducted every five years. These reviews evaluate the program's effectiveness, allowing for necessary framework adjustments. This process ensures that the goals remain relevant, considering in-depth research findings and emerging issues that impact the population. These goals' continued relevance and validity underscore the need for unwavering attention and commitment. In 2014, the United Nations organised a special session, the ICPD Beyond 2014 (ICPD+20), to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the ICPD. This provided an opportunity to reflect on the program's achievements and chart a path forward for continued progress.

Notably, all review sessions emphasised the pivotal role of ICPD goals to align achievements with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and subsequently with SDGs. In conjunction with the MDGs, the human rights approach to family planning recognised poverty eradication as a fundamental human right that could only be achieved by addressing the underlying causes identified under the ICPD. The alignment of goals with the ICPD framework provided an opportunity to address poverty and its determinants from a broader perspective, encompassing factors such as poor health, low literacy and lack of education, and high population growth.

During the regional 20-year review of the ICPD Program of Action in 2013, the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference brought together 47 member countries in the Asia-Pacific region (ESCAP) and adopted the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development. The Ministerial Declaration was a landmark document that affirmed the ICPD PoA and highlighted the need to accelerate progress towards achieving its goals, particularly in sexual and reproductive health

and rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, and population dynamics. The declaration called for integrating population factors into national development strategies and policies and promoting universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and education. The declaration also stressed the importance of addressing challenges related to population ageing and migration (internal and international) and called for developing policies and programs to support vulnerable and marginalised segments. Overall, the 2013 Declaration was a significant step towards advancing the ICPD Program of Action's goals, as it demonstrated participating countries' commitment to the principles of human rights, gender equality, and sustainable development and laid out a comprehensive roadmap for addressing population challenges in the region.

The Ministerial Declaration identified 11 priorities the member countries should prioritise to achieve population and development goals. These comprise poverty eradication and employment, health, and sexual and reproductive health. Services and rights; education; gender equality; adolescents and young people; ageing; international migration; urbanisation and internal migration; population and sustainable development; and data and statistics. These priorities were recognised as closely aligned to the realisation of the SDGs and, as with the SDGs, mutually reinforcing.

Given the diverse demographic and socioeconomic transition experiences within the region, challenges persist in achieving sustainable development. Population dynamics serve as critical drivers and outcomes of sustainable development. As per the Declaration, the member states are committed to protecting all human rights and fundamental freedoms, addressing the root causes of poverty. Furthermore, members affirmed the call for universal and equitable access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information, access to contraceptive services for all couples and individuals, and further reductions in maternal deaths; and emphasised the promotion of gender equality and efforts to end to gender-based violence and child and forced marriage. Population dynamics, such as changes in age structure (some states have a young population while others face an ageing population), urbanisation, and internal/international migration, point towards emerging needs of young and adolescent and older people towards their well-being. Accordingly, the Declaration

emphasises the importance of strengthening health and social protection systems to adequately address the vulnerability of older persons to poverty and social isolation and undertaking effective measures to combat the trafficking of persons and smuggling of migrants.

The Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration (APMD) emphasised the importance of integrating population dynamics into national development plans and policies, promoting gender equality and reproductive health and rights, addressing urbanisation and migration challenges, strengthening data and statistical systems, and enhancing regional cooperation. By aligning with the ICPD Program of Action, the APMD provided a framework to advance population and development efforts and address related SDGs. APMD emphasised implementing specific actions, collaboration among stakeholders, and monitoring and evaluating progress. The Declaration serves as a roadmap to guide countries in pursuing sustainable development and realising the ICPD goals in the Asia–Pacific region. It stressed the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to address population–related issues and uplift the individuals’ and communities’ well-being and rights.

Pakistan is a signatory to the ICPD Program of Action and the 2013 APMD. The government of Pakistan recognises the importance of addressing challenges such as high maternal mortality, inadequate access to family planning services, limited reproductive health rights, gender–based violence, and inadequate access to quality education). Pakistan is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 3 on good health and wellbeing among other goals. However, the country continues to face several challenges related to population and development. Pakistan supported the 2013 APMD on Population and Development, particularly focusing on poverty eradication and employment, health, education, gender equality and women’s empowerment, ageing, international migration, urbanisation and internal migration, as well as population and sustainable development. However, given the ideological and cultural–social factors, Pakistan refrained from supporting the statements in the draft declaration regarding sexual orientation. Pakistan requested that its reservation be duly reflected in the final version of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development.

1.1 Demographic and Population Situation of Pakistan

Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world, with a population of 241 million¹. The population of Pakistan represents 2.9 per cent of the world’s total population, which arguably means that one person in every 38 people on the planet is a resident of Pakistan. Pakistan was sixth globally in 2010 and ranks 5th in 2023. Pakistan is ranked 4th among 51 countries in Asia. The population of Pakistan, as projected by United Nations, is 233.5 million (mid–2023).

Table 1.

Population Size of Pakistan and Provinces and Estimated Change

Region/Area	Census		1998–2017	per cent change
	2017	1998		
Pakistan	207,774,520	132,352,279	75,422,241	57
Punjab	110,012,442	73,621,290	36,391,152	49
Sindh	47,886,051	30,439,893	17,446,158	57
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	30,523,371	17,743,645	12,779,726	72
Balochistan	12,344,408	6,565,885	5,778,523	88
Islamabad	2,006,572	805,235	1,201,337	149

Since 1998, the population of Pakistan has continued to grow, though at varying rates. The population growth rate of Pakistan has gradually decreased over the years. In 2010, the estimated population of Pakistan was around 176.7 million, with an annual population growth rate estimated to be around 2.03 per cent. As of 2021, the population has grown to approximately 225.2 million. This indicates an increase of over 48.5 million people during this period (2010 – 2021). Pakistan has a relatively young (less than 25) population making up 59 per cent of the total population in 2017–18. The youth and adolescent population has been growing, which poses challenges

¹ Pakistan Population (2023) – Worldometer (worldometers.info)

and opportunities for the country regarding education, employment, and social development. Population beyond age 60 is recorded as 6.8 per cent of the household population (2017–18), which is expected to increase in the coming years.

Pakistan has experienced rapid urbanisation over the last two decades, with a significant population shift from rural to urban areas. The urban population has increased from 34 per cent in 1998 to approximately 39 per cent in 2021. According to the 2017 Population Census, Islamabad and Balochistan experienced 3.5 per cent urban growth, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (3 per cent), Punjab (2.7 per cent), and Sindh (2.5 per cent). Various factors, including birth rates, death rates, migration patterns, socioeconomic conditions, and government development policies, influence population dynamics in Pakistan. People from rural areas migrated to urban centres for opportunities and better living conditions, nevertheless pose challenges related to infrastructure, housing, and essential services. Growth in urban slums in Pakistan reflects inequity in the provision of essential services affecting the well-being of migrant families.

1.2 Status of Maternal and Reproductive Health in Pakistan

Pakistan's demographic and socio-economic situation presents opportunities and challenges in accomplishing the priorities outlined in the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference Declaration (APMD). The progress in reproductive health and rights in Pakistan over the last decade can be assessed through various indicators and initiatives such as:

1. **Maternal Health:** Efforts have been made to improve maternal health outcomes, including increasing access to skilled birth attendance, antenatal care, and emergency obstetric care. Maternal mortality rates have declined, indicating progress in this area.
 - A significant decline in the maternal mortality ratio from 276 to 186 (2006–07 to 2019) and a significant improvement in facility-based deliveries from 37 to 71 per cent (2006–07 to 2019) were observed². The decline in the maternal

mortality ratio points towards improvements in healthcare service delivery by the Provincial Health Departments, especially skilled birth attendance (SBA), provision of family planning services and addressing communicable diseases. Major improvements are noted for women reporting the use of skilled birth attendants, which is recorded by 75 per cent of women (in 2019) as against only 52 per cent reported in 2012–13. Three provinces (Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) show noticeable improvements, while Balochistan has improved somewhat (Table 2).

- The fertility rates in Pakistan have shown a slow decline in the last decade, which remains high relative to neighbouring countries. In 2012–13, the total fertility rate was around 3.8 births per woman and decreased to approximately 3.6 births per woman in 2017–18 (Table 2). However, regional and socioeconomic differences in fertility rates within Pakistan need attention.
- On the social aspect, teenage pregnancy has increased from 7.9 (in 2012–13) to 8.1 (in 2017–18), while 18 per cent of women in the age group 20–24 got married before age 18. This reflects a strong continuation of social and cultural practices of early marriage (before age 18) even though the provincial and federal governments have approved several legislations.
- **Contraceptive Use:** Several initiatives were implemented to increase awareness and access to contraception methods, empowering individuals and couples to make informed decisions about family planning. Even though the provision of family planning services received support from federal and provincial governments over the last decade, the contraceptive prevalence rate (all methods and modern methods – Table 3) reflects a stagnant position at 34 per cent (prior to COVID). The unmet need for contraception has declined from 20 per cent (2012–13) to 17 per cent (2017–18). It is still relatively high, leading to many unintended pregnancies and induced abortions. Despite the notable progress in maternal health, especially in safe delivery, for Pakistan, meeting CPR targets (50 per cent by 2020) as pledged in FP2020 and later in ICPD25+ remained a distant vision as millions of women still express the unmet need for contraception and resultant untimely or unintended pregnancies.

² Source: NIPS: 2019 Pakistan Maternal Mortality Survey, 2020.

Table 2.

Trends of important Demographic, Health and Social Indicators – Pakistan and Provinces

Performance Indicators	Pakistan	Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Balochistan
	PDHS 2012–13	PDHS 2017–18				
Maternal Mortality Ratio – 2019 PMMS	–	186	157	224	165	298
Total Fertility Rate	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.6	4	4
Total Wanted Fertility Rate	2.9	2.9	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.1
Proportion of Births Attended by Skilled Health Personnel – 2019 PMMS	–	74	78	72.4	70.2	54.7
Proportion of Births Attended by Skilled Health Personnel	52.1	69.3	71.3	74.8	67.4	38.2
Proportion of Women aged 20–24 Yrs. Who married before age 18	–	18.3	–	–	–	–
Percentage of young women aged 20–24 who gave birth by age 15	–	0.8	–	–	–	–
Percentage of young women aged 20–24 who gave birth by age 18	–	7.4	–	–	–	–
Teenage pregnancy rate	7.9	8.1	6.2	9.9	14.8	11.6

Source: NIPS–Pakistan Maternal Mortality Survey 2019, PDHS 2012–13, PDHS 2017–18

Table 3.

Trends of important Contraceptive Prevalence Rate and Unmet Need for FP – Pakistan and Provinces

Performance Indicators	Pakistan	Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Balochistan
	PDHS 2012–13	PDHS 2017–18				
Contraceptive prevalence rate	35.4	34.2	8.3	30.9	30.9	19.8
Unmet need for all methods of contraception, total (all women) (%)	20.1	17.3	15.8	17.7	20.5	21.6
Demand for family planning satisfied (%)	63.8	66.4	70.8	63.6	60.1	47.8
Currently married women aged 15–49 who want no more child	51.2	43.9	47.8	39.5	42.9	31.1

Source: NIPS, Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys 2012–13 and 2017–18

2. Awareness and Education: Following the National Symposium on Alarming Population Growth in 2018, the government took some notable steps. Professional Training through the Ministry of Federal Education & National Curriculum Council developed the first National Guidelines on adoption of Life Skills Based Education in 2020.

Since then, the National Curriculum Council with support from UNFPA has established a LSBE task force, developed a national standalone curriculum on LSBE and a customized curriculum on inclusive LSBE for youth with disabilities. Efforts have been made to raise awareness and provide education on reproductive health and rights, including Life Skills Based Education and Population Studies in secondary and higher secondary schools, safe motherhood practices, and the importance of family planning. These initiatives aim to empower individuals with knowledge and information to make informed decisions.

Even though electronic media has reached remote areas with the message of family planning, women and adolescents from poor and marginalised segments are missing out and have poor access to needed information and facilitating from where to access FP services. Lady Health Workers (LHWs) reach out to women, but their coverage in hard-to-reach areas remains limited. Male engagement remained visibly missing while discussing

parenting and services' roles and responsibilities. In recent years religious leaders and scholars were involved in removing various inhibitions targeting males at the community level through one-on-one meeting.

1.3 State of Education

Pakistan has recorded progress in the education sector since 2012–13, but the progress remains too slow for girls, indicating fewer opportunities for female children than male children (Table 4). An estimated 22.8 million children in Pakistan, between ages 5 to 16 are out of school (National Commission on the Rights of Child Report). Females with no education (per cent of the household population) are still relatively high (50 per cent) in 2017–18, compared to 34 per cent of males with no education, and only 9 per cent of girls move forward to undertake secondary education. Net Attendance rate reflects hardly any change to show female children are getting better opportunities to study in a secondary and higher level than male children (Table 5). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reflects very low gender parity (0.61), implying a need for awareness and encouragement campaigns for female education. Continued practice of female marrying in teen ages, even in the presence of legislative approvals/legal milieu and many remaining out of school, inhibit promised progress towards overall woman development.

Table 4.

Per cent distribution of the de facto household population age five and over

	No Education	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher
2012–13					
Females	53	22	9	8	8
Males	34	26	15	13	12
2017–18					
Females	50	22	10	9	10
Males	34	25	14	14	13

Source: NIPS, Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys 2012–13 and 2017–18

While there have been positive changes in educational attainment and net attendance ratio, gender disparities in educational access and completion still exist. Efforts are

needed to address these disparities and ensure equitable access to quality education for both males and females in Pakistan, thus promoting overall women's development.

Table 5.
Trends of Selected Education Sector Indicators – Pakistan and Provinces

Performance Indicators	Pakistan	Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pa- khtunkhwa	Balochistan
	PDHS 2012–13	PDHS 2017–18				
Middle/Secondary School NAR	37	37.7	45.1	30.5	34.9	23.9
Gender Parity Females NAR/Males NAR	0.86	0.89	1.07	0.75	0.61	0.75
Households with Adolescent (10–19)	23.5	22.7	–	–	–	–
Households with one person above age 65	4.2	4.4	–	–	–	–
Population with hand–wash facility on premises	–	73.6	83.3	58.3	67	60.3

Source: NIPS, Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys 2012–13 and 2017–18
Abbreviation: NAR, Net Attendance Ratio

1.4 Analysis of Financing Family Planning Activities in Pakistan

Family planning in Pakistan has witnessed many perspectives in achieving its commitments to address the high population growth rate and raise the contraceptive prevalence rate over the decades. Raising awareness for demand creation, improving access to FP providing services, quality assurance and monitoring were key strategies in achieving the FP targets. Engaging the private sector contributed significantly towards achieving these targets. The contributory factors included infrastructure, enhanced salaries, training to counsel clients and dispense services, and provision of commodities and medicines along with IEC material to support counselling services by the service providers.

Population Welfare and Health provides family planning services at the provincial levels through their network of facilities in urban and rural areas with enhanced coverage and accessibility at the doorstep under the Lady Health Workers Program to contact women to counsel, provide services and close follow-up. Mobile service units were

introduced to reach out to women in remote areas, and male mobilisers were introduced to counsel men regarding the benefits of family planning and removing possible misconceptions and service provision, but these services are on a limited scale.

Over the years, public sector services delivery transformed from a 'silo' approach to an 'integrated' model reflecting a policy drive to enhance coverage, access, and efficiency. Public sector rural facilities (Basic Health Units and Rural Health Centres) were contracted-out to autonomous or independent companies to enhance efficiency and integrate FP service delivery. The model is currently effectively executed in Sindh and Balochistan, even though all four provinces initiated the model. The complementary role of NGOs, SMOs and the private sector boosted availability and addressed the inequity of provision, especially in rural and remote areas. The private sector, spearheaded by a social marketing model or profit-seeking motives, uplifted the service network, complemented communication efforts, and some pursued a sustainable model to minimise dependence on donor support. International lessons learned and best practices were carried forward by civil society organisations and NGOs through linking women with public or private service delivery networks using incentives and motivating factors.

The public sector increased its expenditures on health, estimated at 0.8 per cent of GDP in 2015–16, compared to 1.2 per cent in 2021–22³. The overall funding has increased by 35 per cent from Rs. 25.09 billion in 2018–19 to Rs. 34 billion in 2021–22⁴. This increase was recorded even with COVID–based funds availability and diversion of funds. According to the survey, the primary funding source for FP was government (82 per cent in 2021–22), which rose from 72 per cent in 2018–19 (Figure 1). In the total spending for 2021–22, the share by NPIs was 11 per cent; UN organisations were 4 per cent and 3 per cent from the SMOs. As the biggest financing source, the government has potentially more leverage on where and how to spend the available funds. The performance of the public sector depends not only on the release of funds but also on how those funds are allocated and utilised. The progress of program implementation to meet the

objectives critically depends on allocating and releasing funds for non–salary activities. In the public sector, the salary components increased from 56 per cent to 68 per cent from 2018–19 to 2021–22 (Table 6) and made 71 per cent of total spending and only 12 per cent was spent on the procurement of contraceptives and medicines, and eight per cent on operational matters. The spending on awareness campaigns has declined, especially in the post–devolution period. Funds for procurement, IEC, and operational matters were diverted to Health to meet emergency needs related to COVID during 2019–20. Whereas in the private sector, such as SMOs, NGOs, and UN organisations, allocate most of their expenditure to non–salary items, including training/capacity building, IEC, outsourcing, policy development and advocacy and monitoring.

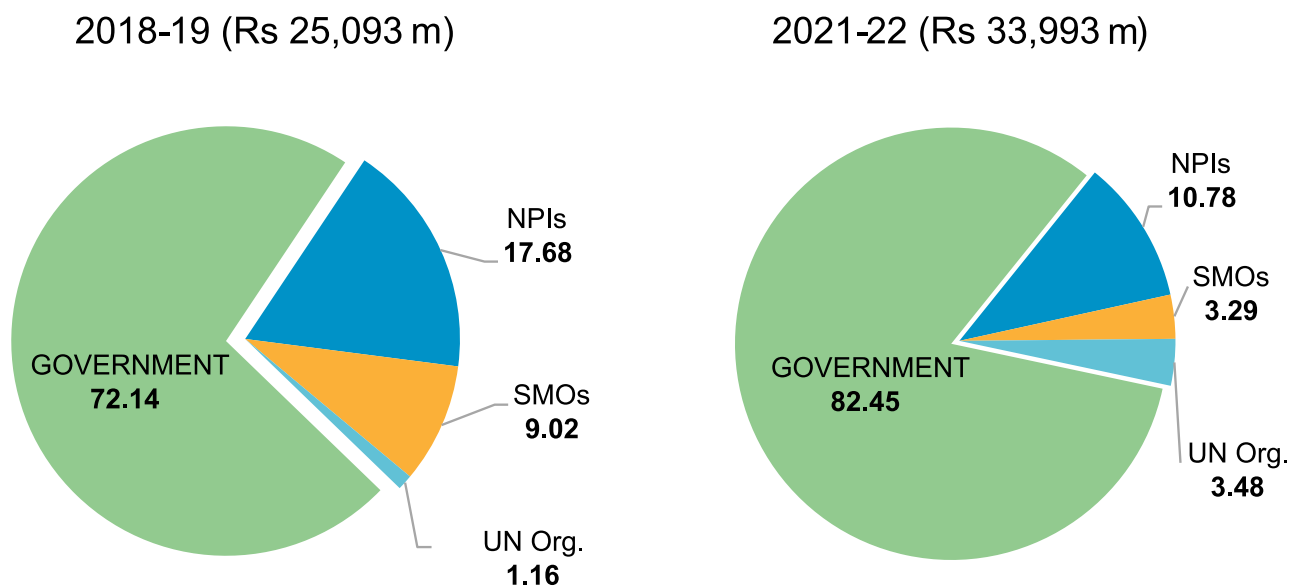


Figure 1.

Per cent of Total Expenditure by Key Stakeholders during 2018–19 and 2021–22

The breakdown of the distribution of FP expenditure (2019–20) shows PWD (61 per cent) in the lead, followed by LHW Program (35 per cent), MNCH and Health Department (one per cent each) and federal only two per cent. Departments of Health across provinces have massive facilities, and a community–based network is committed to providing family planning services as per provincial health strategies and Population Policy in vogue.

Over the four years (2018–2022), the Dept. of Health reported a 61 per cent increase in expenditures, the bulk

of which went to the salary component (87 per cent in 2021–22). Contraceptive procurement received only 7 per cent in 2018–19 and rose to 11 per cent in 2021–22 to meet the severe supply shortages experienced during the COVID years. This trend is noted in all provinces where the focus remained on service delivery rather than strengthening the ‘enabling environment’ for the adoption and continuity of family planning. Whereas neighbouring countries, such as Bangladesh, attained a CPR of 33 per cent, spent 46 per cent on communications, 22 per cent on FP services and 24 per cent on administrative matters.

³ https://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapter_22/PES11-HEALTH.pdf

⁴ Population Council. Family Planning Assessment Survey 2018–2020 and Family Planning Spending Assessment for 2020 to 2022. Islamabad.

Table 6.

Trend of Percent of Total Expenditure by Stakeholders by Salary / Non-Salary components

Overall Sector's Expenditure			NGOs Expenditure		
	2018-19	2021-22		2018-19	2021-22
Salary	56	68	Salary	34	34
Non-Salary	44	32	Non-Salary	66	66
Total Public Sectors Expenditure			SMOs Expenditure		
	2018-19	2021-22		2018-19	2021-22
Salary	66	71	Salary	24	34
Non-Salary	34	29	Non-Salary	76	66
Expenditure by Pop Welfare Dpt.			UN Organizations Expenditure		
	2018-19	2021-22		2018-19	2021-22
Salary	64	65	Salary	41	42
Non-Salary	36	35	Non-Salary	59	58

Source: Population Council. Family Planning Assessment Survey 2018-2020 and Family Planning Spending Assessment for 2020 to 2022. Islamabad.

1.4.1 NGOs Role and Financing of Family Planning Activities

A small group of large local NGOs (22) and a few international NGOs (10) played a complementary role in the field of family planning and maintained their overall expenditure average at Rs 17.7 billion in four years, i.e. 2018-22 (around 16 per cent of the total FP expenditure)⁵. The NGO's salary expenditure is around a third of the public sector salary component (31 per cent), and substantial attention to operational matters (21 per cent) of facilities and maintaining infrastructure. NGOs allocate a higher percentage of their budget to advocacy and communications (five per cent), training (four per

cent), policy advocacy (six per cent), and outsourcing (16 per cent) compared to the public sector. NGOs promote equity by targeting poor segments of the population and providing incentives for them to use family planning services. The persistent expenditures of NGOs ensure poor segments receive services at their doorsteps, helping them evolve and achieve fertility desires and goals. Most NGOs rely on government contraceptive supplies procured from local markets to meet urgent needs. They maintain free FP services for the poor and nominal charges on MCH services. Local NGOs continue to rely on donor assistance to sustain their operations. IPPF dedicated over a billion Rupees in 2020-21 to a local NGO, while five other international NGOs funded local NGO activities.

⁵ Population Council. Family Planning Assessment Survey 2018-2020 and Family Planning Spending Assessment for 2020 to 2022. Islamabad. and Family Planning Spending Assessment for 2020 to 2022. Islamabad.

1.4.2 Financing of Family Planning Activities by Private Sector Social Marketing Organizations

Two organisations (Greenstar and DKT) have proactively enhanced access and availability of FP in urban areas across Pakistan and have reached out to rural communities in recent years. The SMO FP expenditures were Rs. 7.9 billion during 2018–19 and 2021–22, fluctuating from Rs. 2.3 billion (in 2018–19) to Rs. 1.1 billion (in 2021–22). Their overall expenditure remained at less than 7 per cent of total FP expenditures in Pakistan during four years. SMOs spend relatively low funds on salaries, 34 per cent in 2021–22 (as they use the market network) and 7 per cent on operational matters.

SMOs' significant investment goes to procuring contraceptives (29 per cent), followed by human resource development and quality of services, and awareness campaigns for demand generation. Four donors (FCDO,

DKT, KfW, and an Anonymous donor) supported SMOs financing during 2021–22. SMOs have greater flexibility in using funds than the public sector and utilising them strategically to enhance access and affordability. Total expenditure by SMOs during 2020–21 was Rs. 2.769 billion, of which 35 per cent was generated locally (pricing of contraceptives). FP users who can afford the services use SMO-supported facilities. PDHS 2017–18 results show that government facilities are accessed by 14.8 per cent of all women, while other private sector sources (SMO supported) are reached by 40 per cent. The cost-effectiveness of SMO investment appears quite reasonable as, with limited finances available, it reaches out to a much larger percentage of clients. The NGOs and SMOs provide access to around 55 per cent of all women of reproductive age, while their expenditure is only 25 per cent of the overall expenditure by the sector. It is a cost-effective support in the sector and its growth and sustainability need strengthening.



02 METHODS

The report on the voluntary national survey ICPD has been prepared through a multi-pronged approach by collecting information from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included extensive stakeholder engagement and intergovernmental provincial and national consultations. Secondary sources included desk reviews of sectoral reports, budgets, policies, ADPs, federal and provincial surveys and relevant legislative documents. The approach was adopted given the importance of inclusivity and adherence to the universal principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ while implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Figure 2. Process of Conducting National Voluntary Survey - Pakistan 2023



Four provincial and a national consultative workshops were organised and hosted by the Planning and Development Department to capture achievements, challenges, and recommendations related to the areas of action outlined in the ICPD framework of action. A final validation meeting was organised to develop a consensus on achievements, challenges, and recommendations from the provincial consultation. The schedule and mode of provincial consultations, national workshop and validation workshop, are placed below, and a detailed list of attendees for each workshop is in Annex I.

The workshops were divided into three sessions to capture the responses and get insights on achievements, challenges, and policy recommendations on the ICPD priority areas, including Poverty eradication and employment, Food Security, Health, Ageing, Sexual and Reproductive Health & Reproductive Rights, Education, Adolescent and Young People, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Population and Sustainable Development, Climate Change, Data and Statistics, Digital Transformation, International Migration, and Urbanization & Internal Migration. The association of ICPD priority areas with the relevant SDGs is presented in Figure 3.



Figure 3.
APMD Priorities Areas and their relationship with SDGs

All participants were divided into four groups, each assigned to discuss a specific thematic area, such as poverty eradication, employment, gender equality, and health. At the end of the sessions, each group presented

their feedback and completed the National Voluntary Survey for APMD 2013. Details on achievements, challenges and recommendations are presented in subsequent chapters.

Table 7.

Schedule of Consultative and Validation Workshops on ICPD Voluntary National Survey, Pakistan 2023

No	Workshop Title	Province	Date	Mode of Conduction
1	1st Provincial Consultative Workshop	Punjab	16th May 2023	Virtual (Zoom)
2	2nd Provincial Consultative Workshop	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	18th May 2023	Physical
3	3rd Provincial Consultative Workshop	Balochistan	23rd May 2023	Physical
4	4th Provincial Consultative Workshop	Sindh	25th May 2023	Physical
5	National Consultative Workshop	Islamabad	29th May 2023	Physical
6	National Validation Workshop	National	31st May 2023	Virtual (Zoom)



03

Monitoring Progress and Challenges of APMD Priority Areas

3.1 Poverty Eradication and Employment

Although Pakistan has made significant efforts in poverty eradication and unemployment reduction through various laws, policies, and programs, a substantial portion of the population lives below the poverty line. Over the last decade, Pakistan has witnessed a decline in multidimensional poverty from 55 per cent in 2011–12 to 39 per cent in 2018–19⁶ (MPI). The income poverty rate in Pakistan has shown mixed trends during this period.

Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas than urban centres, as access to essential services, education, and employment opportunities may be limited in the countryside. Additionally, there have been disparities in poverty rates among the provinces, with regions like Balochistan and Sindh showing higher poverty rates than Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa⁷. By 2023, the poverty rate in the country is projected to reach 37.2 per cent, with an estimated daily income of \$3.65 (2017 PPP). This rate is slightly lower than the recorded figure of 39.8 per cent in 2018. However, considering the growth in the population, there will be approximately three million more individuals living in poverty compared to the number in 2018⁸. Based on the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) survey, approximately 27 per cent of households in Pakistan are experiencing a worse economic situation, while 12 per cent are facing a much worse situation⁹.

6. More than 48 million Pakistanis have come out of extreme poverty (US\$1.90 per person per day) over the past two decades. Poverty has also declined significantly at the lower middle-income country poverty line (US\$3.20 per person per day) from 73.5 per cent in 2001 to 34.3 per cent by 2018–19. This makes Pakistan the most successful country in reducing extreme poverty in South Asia. This decline was driven primarily by the expansion of off-farm economic opportunities and an increase in out-migration, with its associated foreign remittances. However, these gains are at risk of reversal in the medium term due to the country's low human capital accumulation, high fertility rate, underlying macro-fiscal risks, and—as discussed in this report—the impacts of

climate change. Source: World Bank Group. PAKISTAN: Executive Summary. Country Climate and Development Report. Nov 2022

7. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (2019-20). Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division. July - 2021.
8. World Bank (2023). Poverty and Equity Brief - South Asia – Pakistan : World Bank Data
9. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (2019-20). Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division. July - 2021.

The Pakistan Vision 2025 sets a comprehensive sustainable development and poverty reduction roadmap. In 2017, establishing a separate Ministry and Division for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety aimed to enhance coordination and align resources for poverty reduction. The Prime Minister's Youth Program, initiated in 2013, aims to empower youth through skill development,

entrepreneurship, and education. The Ehsaas Strategy and Framework, launched in 2019, encompasses multiple initiatives, such as the Kamyab Jawan Program, which focuses on providing vulnerable populations with financial assistance, social protection, and livelihood opportunities and support to young people.

Table 8.

Province wise initiatives for Poverty Eradication and Employment in Pakistan (2013-23)

Province	Policies/Programs
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	The Social Protection Policy, Sehat Sahulat Program, Insaf Rozgar Scheme, and the Youth Employment Program have contributed to poverty alleviation and employment generation.
Punjab	Punjab's efforts include the Punjab Growth Strategy 2023, Punjab Social Protection Authority, and Punjab Rozgar Scheme. (like the Punjab Skills Development Fund focuses on providing vocational and technical skills and placement).
Sindh	In Sindh, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Social Protection Authority Act, and various education and enterprise development initiatives have aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment.
Balochistan	Balochistan's efforts include the Balochistan Strategy 2020, Skill Development Program, and the Best Self-Employment Program.

At the national level, acts such as the Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Act, Workers Welfare Fund Act, and the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Act have provided social protection and support to vulnerable workers. The provincial Zakat, Ushr Acts, and other regional legislation have further

contributed to poverty reduction and welfare. These collective efforts highlight Pakistan's commitment to addressing poverty and unemployment through targeted policies and programs implemented at the national and provincial levels.

The federal and provincial governments have taken several initiatives to reduce poverty over the last 15 years. Some of the key achievements are presented below:

- Promoting economic growth and job creation through initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and developing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) played a vital role. These initiatives aim to attract foreign investment, enhance industrial development, and generate employment opportunities. However, the challenge lies in ensuring inclusive growth that benefits all segments of society.
- To address unemployment, Pakistan has focused on enhancing skills development and market-driven vocational training programs to enhance employability.
- Efforts have been made to extend social protection coverage and improve working conditions for informal workers. For poverty reduction, initiatives such as the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), which provides cash transfers to low-income households, have partially helped alleviate poverty and improve social protection for vulnerable populations. Cash Transfer Facilitation Centers established under BISP provide job placement services, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support to female beneficiaries, helping them find employment or start businesses.

- Given the significance of the rural economy in Pakistan, there have been initiatives to promote rural development and agricultural productivity. Initiatives include the Kissan Package, agriculture extension services, investments in irrigation infrastructure, agricultural credit and support for small-scale farmers, modernising farming practices, and market linkages for farmers to enhance agricultural productivity.
- National Rural Support Program (NRSP) and the Rural Support Program Network (RSPN) have successfully promoted rural development and poverty reduction and contributed to employment generation.
- Public-private partnerships promote resource mobilisation, knowledge sharing, and innovative approaches to address poverty-related challenges. Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing Sector in Pakistan has experienced significant growth, creating job opportunities for the youth.
- Promotion and support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises through policies and programs. Easy access to microfinance services for individuals and small enterprises in rural areas and provide small loans and financial services to support income-generating activities

Challenges

3.1 Poverty Eradication and Employment

Pakistan has a significant portion of its population living below the poverty line. High poverty rates challenge poverty eradication efforts, requiring comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of poverty and create sustainable livelihood opportunities. Poverty has declined in Pakistan, but regional disparities remain challenging, with higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. The economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including lockdown measures and job losses, have affected vulnerable populations and posed additional challenges to poverty reduction efforts. Some of the significant challenges include:



- A high population growth rate, directly and indirectly, generates employment opportunities to meet the growing workforce. Unemployment and underemployment, particularly among youth, remain the main challenges.
- Pakistan's economy employs a relatively large portion of the workforce in the informal sector, which often lacks formal employment benefits such as disability and death covers, pensions, decent working conditions, and maternity covers. Bringing the informal sector under formal regulation and providing a better spectrum of social protection to the entire workforce is a big challenge that must be addressed.
- Pakistan has a large labour force, but there is a mismatch between the skills they possess and the skills demanded by the job market, causing unemployment or underemployment.
- Gender disparities persist in Pakistan's labour market, with women facing lower labour force participation rates and limited access to decent work opportunities. Overcoming gender-based barriers is critical to address poverty eradication programs.
- A severe disparity exists between rural and urban areas in employment opportunities and access to essential services. The rural labour force faces limited access to markets, lack of infrastructure, and inadequate social services causing significant hindrances to poverty eradication and employment generation efforts.
- Inadequate resources and funding pose challenges to implementing effective poverty eradication and employment generation programs.
- At various levels, capacity constraints pose barriers to effectively envisioning and implementing poverty eradication and employment generation strategies. While small-scale training programs have been conducted, they have not been extended nationally.
- The availability of disaggregated data on poverty and employment is limited. The National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) provides poverty data and targets beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). However, integrating de-identified individual-level data with other departments or institutions working on poverty reduction and employment is lacking.

- The political support for poverty eradication and employment is inconsistent due to changing political governments and political instability.
- While coordination mechanisms exist at the national level, the lack of inter-departmental coordination among provincial departments and concerned stakeholders responsible for implementation hampers progress.
- Public awareness and understanding of the interrelation between poverty eradication and employment is also limited. A bottom-up approach to poverty eradication and employment, involving individuals in the lowest wealth quintiles and the unemployed, has not been effectively pursued.
- Various disasters and emergencies, such as repeated floods COVID-19 pandemic, have hindered the implementation of poverty eradication and employment programs.

3.2 HEALTH

Pakistan has made significant achievements in the health sector, focusing on various areas to improve the well-being of its population. One notable accomplishment is the increased immunisation coverage. The country has worked diligently to strengthen routine immunisation programs, launch vaccination campaigns, and improve vaccine supply chains. These efforts have resulted in higher immunisation coverage, protecting children and preventing the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Pakistan is actively engaged in polio eradication efforts. Towards this, the country has implemented intensive vaccination campaigns, community mobilisation initiatives, and improved surveillance systems. These efforts have contributed to a significant decline in polio cases and brought Pakistan closer to the goal of eradicating polio.

Pakistan has also made strides in improving maternal and child health. Initiatives have been implemented to promote skilled birth attendance, enhance access to prenatal and postnatal care, and address issues of malnutrition to improve child survival rates. The discussion about integrating family planning in all health services, particularly maternal and child health services, is another significant step towards improving reproductive health outcomes.

Table 9.

Province-wise Initiatives for Health in Pakistan (2013-23)

Province	Policies/Programs
National Level	The National Vision 2025 provides a comprehensive framework for sustainable development, including the health sector. The National Health Vision (2016–25) focuses on strengthening health systems, ensuring universal health coverage, and improving health service delivery. The Human Resource for Health Vision (2018–30) emphasises developing and deploying skilled healthcare professionals to meet the population's healthcare needs. Additionally, the Sehat Sahulat Program (2015) aims to provide health insurance coverage to vulnerable segments of society.
Punjab	In Punjab, the Health Sector Strategy (2019–2028) focuses on improving healthcare infrastructure, enhancing service delivery, and strengthening health governance. The Punjab Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases Program targets preventing and managing non-communicable diseases.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Health Policy (2018–2025) outlines the province's health priorities, including improving healthcare access, strengthening health systems, and promoting community participation. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated Health Programme aims to transform the healthcare system by improving service delivery, governance, and accountability.
Balochistan	In Balochistan, the Health Sector Strategy (2018–2025) emphasises improving health infrastructure, human resource capacity, and service delivery. These provincial strategies and plans align with the national vision and contribute to the overall progress in the health sector.

Challenges

Despite the achievements made by Pakistan, health sector challenges remain that hinder its smooth progress. Access to quality healthcare services needs attention, particularly in remote and marginalised areas. The key challenges faced by the Health sector in Pakistan from 2010 onwards include:



- Healthcare expenditure as a percentage of GDP is relatively low, leading to inadequate funding for healthcare programs, infrastructure, and services; unequal distribution of healthcare resources, with urban areas having better access to healthcare compared to rural and remote areas. Health spending was around 0.9 per cent of GDP in 2010, which increased to 1.2 per cent in 2015 and then declined to 0.9 per cent in 2020. Whereas at least six per cent of GDP to the health sector is recommended. The actual expenditure on health by the government has generally been lower than the recommended targets, resulting in an expenditure gap. The limited financial investment hampers the availability of resources for healthcare infrastructure, equipment, and services.
- There are competing priorities in the Health sector to be addressed: Enhancing access to quality healthcare services, particularly in remote and marginalized areas, still needs improvement, besides increased investment in healthcare infrastructure, healthcare workforce development, and the implementation of comprehensive health policies and strategies.
- Pakistan faces the severe challenge of inequality and a shortage of healthcare professionals and personnel. The shortage of healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff, hampers the delivery of quality healthcare services. Pakistan has a low physician-to-population ratio of around 0.9 doctors per 1,000 people .
- Several efforts have been initiated to integrate services and establish effective coordination mechanisms for family planning services within MCNH Services. However, a myopic approach among health sector managers has become a severe challenge and resistance to such innovative ideas, where several countries have gained success and achieved their maternal and child health goals. Accessing healthcare facilities, especially in rural and remote areas.
- Insufficient healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals, clinics, and medical facilities
- Creating awareness among the public about health issues, promoting health-seeking behaviours, and engaging communities in preventive healthcare decision-making are important aspects of implementation and monitoring. Pakistan has allocated little attention to awareness and advocacy campaigns at all levels, including enhancing political will to educate people about preventive behaviours and health-seeking attitudes.
- Weak governance, inadequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and limited accountability in the healthcare sector.
- Low attention was given to strengthen the capacity of healthcare delivery systems and relevant institutions for effective program implementation and performance monitoring. This weak area includes training healthcare workers, enhance managerial and technical skills, improve infrastructure, and strengthen health information systems

3.3 SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & RIGHTS

Pakistan has made significant strides in Sexual, Reproductive Health, & Rights (SRHR). Necessary attention and investment have been provided to maternal health by ensuring safe deliveries and addressing the three delays contributing to maternal deaths during delivery and postpartum. To further strengthen the commitment towards SRHR, all provinces and the federal government approved FP2030 Commitments in 2022. This collective commitment demonstrates a shared vision and determination to advance SRHR goals and targets.

¹⁰ Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination. (2016). National Health Vision 2016-25.

¹¹ National Health Workforce Accounts: Pakistan 2018. Human Resource for Health Vision 2018-30- Islamabad

- **Availability of services:** A high-quality family planning service is affordable and readily available to all individuals, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location. The recent introduction of long-acting methods (implants) and self-care injections (Sayana press) has provided greater choice and aligned with the needs of women for birth spacing.
- Coverage of family planning increased substantially over the years, not only through the public sector health network and community-based workers, while private sector initiatives complemented the efforts and engaged local practitioners and drug stores. Though urban areas were reasonably covered by SMOs and public facilities and around two-thirds of rural communities reached out by Lady Health Workers at the doorsteps across Pakistan, women and men from urban slums and the migrant population remained inadequately covered. Social marketing companies with significant donor support made available birth spacing methods (oral pills, IUCDs, injectables, condoms, and implants) and services using a variety of service delivery points. The government and non-governmental organizations have been working to expand family planning services and ensure the availability of a wide range of contraceptive methods. This includes promoting the use of long-acting reversible contraceptives and ensuring the availability of contraceptive commodities.
- Improving skill-based competencies & training of healthcare staff in remote health facilities in implant insertion and ample provision of supplies by UNFPA is one example of improved service availability.
- Pakistan committed to strengthening health delivery systems that would ensure the provision of integrated sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, within the broader primary healthcare context. This includes training healthcare providers, ensuring reliable contraceptive supply chains, and establishing effective referral systems.
- Policy and Legal Framework: Pakistan has developed policies and laws to support reproductive health and rights, including the provincial Population Policies and Health Sector Strategies. Provincial Population Policies designed in 2015 and 2016 affirmed the centrality of fertility decline to achieve the policy objective through timely completion of replacement level fertility (2.1 births) by 2030 – 2035 and that the health and well-being of families improve their quality of life. The Policy documents focused on achieving universal access to comprehensive and integrated quality sexual and reproductive health services to reduce the unmet need for family planning. The policy frameworks aim to ensure access to quality reproductive health services and protect the rights of individuals in making decisions related to their reproductive health.
- Post FP2020 Commitments (2012) and APMD 2013, all official documents and strategies placed integrated family planning services as an essential part of the health service package. These policy documents allowed the Depts. of Health to allocate funds and procure contraceptives for their facilities and outlets. In this regard, the Reproductive Health Bill approved by all provinces played a critical steering role.
- Pakistan has formulated a fresh National Narrative on Population Growth, endorsed by the Council of Common Interests. This national narrative aims to address population growth within three parameters: Balance, Resources and Responsibilities, emphasizing the importance of SRHR in achieving sustainable development.
- The Population Task Force highly recommended integrating family planning into all health services, especially maternal and child health services, approved by the government Council of Common Interests.
- Task Shifting / Task Sharing Strategy was approved by all provinces, accompanied by competency-based training of paramedics and doctors in implant insertion conducted across provinces to provide implants to young, currently married women desiring birth spacing.
- Formation of Country Engagement Working Group (CEWG) headed by the Federal Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination for a cohesive approach to address coverage, access and availability of services in 2019
- Overall steady increase in domestic allocation of funds for family planning, especially provincial-level allocations
- Post-devolution strengthening of Population Departments, especially in coordination with the Department of Health to expand FP services.
- Pilot testing of several innovations and best practices by development partners, including Sayana Press in Sindh, to improve method choice, vouchers for people with low incomes to access FP services

- Pool procurement of contraceptives approved to address cost-effectiveness; use of innovative technology for record-keeping and reporting; virtual training and e-health initiatives, etc.
- Pakistan made progress in improving access to reproductive healthcare services. Additional service delivery points (BHUs, RHCs, etc.) across rural areas, especially in Punjab, provision of maternal health services (24/7), have significantly enhanced access to much-needed services to save mothers' lives and provide quality services. Efforts have been made to increase awareness about family planning and expand the availability of contraceptives, primarily through mobile service units and community workers, all of which help improve maternal and child health outcomes. Programs like the Lady Health Worker Program and donor-supported initiatives have increased access to SRH services in rural and urban areas.
- Donor-supported initiatives have been crucial in training healthcare staff in implant and IUCD insertions/removal. Additionally, the supply of implants to the Department of Health for provision to women in remote areas has improved accessibility to contraceptive methods.
- A partner-supported post-pregnancy family planning (PPFP) initiative has garnered high acknowledgement, particularly for its popularity among women post-delivery period. This initiative has contributed to raising awareness and increasing access to FP services for women during this critical time.
- Monitoring and assessment of SRHR outcomes were conducted regularly through the Pakistan Demographic and Health Surveys (PDHS) of 2012–13 and 2017–18, along with the Pakistan Maternal Mortality Survey of 2019. These assessments enable policymakers and stakeholders to track progress, identify gaps, and make informed decisions to improve SRHR services and outcomes.
- The complementary role of UN organizations to support these activities with substantial resources during four year period (Rs 1.8 billion, almost half of the total UN Organization's funding) contributed toward competency-based Task-Shifting/Sharing training, support higher-level advocacy to mobilize parliamentarians and bureaucracy to maintain policy dialogue and keep the discussion on high population growth rate alive.

Table 10.

Province wise initiatives for Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights in Pakistan (2013-23)

Province	Policies/Programs
National Level	These include the National Population Policy 2020, National Reproductive Health Strategy 2017–2022, Adolescent Reproductive Health Strategy 2017–2022, National Gender Policy 2020, Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2016, and the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013.
Punjab	Punjab has approved the Punjab Population Sector Policy 2015–16 and Punjab Reproductive Health Strategy 2017–2022.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Population Policy 2015 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Reproductive Health Strategy 2017–2022.
Sindh	Sindh has the Sindh Population Policy 2015, Costed Implementation Plan for FP 2016–2022, and the Sindh Reproductive Health Strategy 2017–2022.
Balochistan	Balochistan has the Balochistan Population Policy 2016 and Reproductive Health Strategy 2017–2022.
Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir	Moreover, Gilgit–Baltistan, Azad Jammu, and Kashmir have also developed their respective Reproductive Health Strategies for 2017–2022.

Challenges

3.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights

It is important to note that progress varies across different regions within Pakistan, and challenges still exist in ensuring equitable access to reproductive health services, addressing cultural and social barriers, and reaching marginalized populations.



- Integration of Reproductive Health Services:** In pursuance of the ICPD Program of Action, Pakistan adopted the Reproductive Health Service Package 2001 at the national level. Service provision was expected to integrate family planning into health services, especially maternal and child health. Family planning services continue as a standalone while the reproductive health approach enhanced awareness among service providers regarding HIV/AIDS and related aspects but addressed only by public sector Healthcare providers. The right to receive information and services was given attention but remained limited to the Population Welfare sector and NGO initiatives in urban and rural settings.
- Access to Services:** As per ICPD25 and APMD, Pakistan is committed to providing information without discrimination to potential users. The public sector makes available various commodities and services free of charge and social marketing on highly subsidized rates, but the provider's bias and, at times, 'non-inclusive' focus make access problematic and inhibits achieving stated objectives and goals. The greater focus of community-based workers (LHWs and CMWs) on women aged 24 and above reflects their biases, thus rendering a large segment of young married potential users left behind/ unattended from accurate information and services. Furthermore, though constrained contraceptive supplies emerged as a severe issue during 2020 and 2021, the persistence of a high unmet need for contraception over the years reflects physical, psychological and information barriers at work, thus impeding efficient performance. The high rate of drop-outs is a major issue in Pakistan and is well known for inadequate information shared with users by service providers, as providers are inadequately trained while time dedicated to explaining to users is compromised due to competing tasks.
- Choice of methods vs popular methods:** Serious concerns have emerged, needing urgent attention as, over the years, two modern methods (tubal ligation and condoms) are given prominence in Pakistan's contraceptive method mix. These methods have low effectiveness in terms of lowering fertility. Most Health and Population Welfare facilities present a range of methods to select from. A reasonable per cent of women initiate using modern methods like injectables, IUCDs and oral pills, and condoms. The choice becomes irrelevant when users do not have adequate and accurate information to manage side effects or experience unintended pregnancy due to method failure or using an inefficient method like a condom. Tubal ligation's popularity is linked to the reward of performance, and the method is well institutionalized in service and promotion by community-based workers. Condoms are a highly inefficient method but still promoted for their ease of access, affordable, and with no side effects. The absence of research on unintended pregnancies by condom users is a gap that needs to be addressed to understand its effectiveness in meeting fertility goals.
- Expenditure analysis of the public sector over four year period (presented earlier) reflects a weak response and low investment in IEC activities (1.36 per cent), capacity building (0.96 per cent), and monitoring and evaluation (1.29 per cent). Such weak budgetary support to strengthen the enabling environment in terms of a couple's ability to make informed decisions, build competency-based skills of providers, etc., is highly inconsistent with the current needs and far from desired level for enabling the environment to achieve improved outcomes and the achievement of development goals. This is undoubtedly a severe gap that the public sector cannot leave to NGOs and private sector organizations to address.**
- Provision of implants on a limited scale to staff trained in implant insertion broadened the choice of methods to ultimate beneficiaries through Dept of Health outlets. Initial results were positive, but scaling up the initiative by Dept of Health has not been realized, reflected in the lack of preparedness of various facilities and the absence of supplies for continued service delivery. There appears to be a visible gap between the government's approval of Task Sharing strategy and allocations made for the preparedness of facilities to provide implants (in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).**

- A major challenge to the ‘enabling environment’ regarding easy access and affordable contraceptives was the imposition of a 17 per cent sales tax since 2021 on condoms (private sector sales)¹². Rupee depreciation and declining parity with the US Dollar, the rising cost of procurement has put additional pressure on domestic financing. COVID-related logistic barriers emerged and impacted 2020 and 2021, leading to shortages that may have resulted in unintended pregnancies and higher fertility.
- Local contraceptive production has been a high-priority recommendation in ICPD25 that received some attention, but no substantive progress is visible.
- Provincial Departments of Health have implemented Integrated Health Projects since 2015–16, but each failed to conceive and integrate FP as part of health services adequately.
- The increase in domestic financing of reproductive health over the last decade is still lower than the desired level, negatively impacting the availability and accessibility of essential services, emphasizing the need for increased financial investments. While international support has complemented local financing, a significant gap exists between the available resources and the actual requirements.
- The lack of capacity development for implementing programs on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is reflected in the gaps in healthcare providers’ knowledge and skills.
- The post-devolution period has seen neglect of public awareness campaigns and information dissemination through Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns since 2011. The lack of investment means correct information does not reach women regarding their sexual and reproductive health needs.
- A major challenge experienced is the lack of a bottom-up approach and engaging individuals with the lowest access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights from marginalized communities, women, and youth in decision-making processes. This lack of inclusivity reflects inequities and disparities in planning and services.
- The inadequate overall political support for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is evident in the lack of priority to population issues. Despite policies addressing these concerns, many parliamentarians and bureaucrats do not prioritize them. This emphasizes the need for intensified advocacy and policy engagement efforts to raise awareness and engage policymakers in recognizing the importance of addressing sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as a national priority.
- The lack of cross-ministerial coordination is supported by the challenges in implementing comprehensive and integrated approaches.
- Except for Sindh, even procurement of contraceptives is done on a departmental basis, notwithstanding the principle of benefits based on economies of scale. Integration of services is still in isolation and only in a few cases where NGO or donor-supported projects have made limited-scale efforts to integrate FP in MCH and general health services (ICT Integrated Service Model in one example).

3.4 EDUCATION

Educational attainment is an important ICPD and APMD priority area. The educational attainment and net attendance ratio for males and females in Pakistan have improved, although gender disparities still exist. Implementing various legislations, policies, and strategies/programs has contributed to these positive outcomes. Here is an overview of the trends and major achievements:

- The primary school completion rate has improved for both males and females between 2012 and 2021. The primary school completion rate for males increased from 70 per cent in 2012–13 to 75 per cent in 2018–19¹³. The primary school completion rate for females increased from 57 per cent in 2012–13 to 67 per cent in 2018–19. Furthermore, the secondary school completion rate has also shown improvement for both males and females during this period. The secondary school completion rate for males increased from 47 per cent in 2012–13 to 54 per cent in 2018–19. For females, the secondary school completion rate increased from 38 per cent in 2012–13 to 49 per cent in 2018–19.

¹² The GST of 17 per cent has been removed from July 2023, as per Ministry of Finance notification.

¹³ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (2019-20). Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division. July - 2021.

- The net attendance ratio has shown improvement for both males and females at the primary level. According to the Pakistan Education Statistics, the net attendance ratio for males increased from 62 per cent in 2012–13 to 68 per cent in 2019–20¹⁴ and for females, it increased from 56 per cent in 2012–13 to 63 per cent in 2019–20. The net attendance ratio at the secondary level has also shown improvement, but gender disparities persist. According to the Pakistan Education Statistics, the net attendance ratio for males increased from 32 per cent in 2012–13 to 39 per cent in 2019–20. For females, it increased from 25 per cent in 2012–13 to 33 per cent in 2019–20.
- Efforts to achieve universal primary education have yielded remarkable results. The net enrollment rate for primary education in Pakistan increased to 85 percent¹⁵. The National Curriculum Framework Pakistan 2017 has ensured a standardized curriculum, improving educational outcomes. The Annual Status of Education Report 2021 highlighted that 66 per cent of children in grade 5 could read a grade two level story, compared to 59 per cent in 2018¹⁶.
- Infrastructure development has also been a critical focus. As per the Annual Status of Education Report 2021, the percentage of schools with missing facilities, such as electricity and toilets, decreased from 32 per cent in 2018 to 25 per cent in 2020¹⁷.
- Efforts to promote gender equality and girls' education have yielded positive outcomes. The National Education Policy Framework 2018 prioritizes girls' education, leading to increased enrollment and retention rates for girls. The gross enrollment rate for girls at the primary level increased from 85 per cent in 2017–18 to 88 per cent in 2019–20 (Pakistan Education Statistics Report 2019–2020).
- Improved data collection and monitoring systems are being implemented through initiatives such as the National Education Management Information System and National Education Assessment System.
- The government is developing comprehensive policies and engaging international organizations and development partners for their support.
- Pakistan has a significant population of children who are neither in school nor in any formal training. The South Punjab School Education Department initiated the Subh e Nau schools programme to provide accelerated learning to children engaged in labour.

Challenges

3.4 Education

Pakistan has faced low literacy and educational attainment rates, particularly among women and marginalized communities, over the last several decades, which hinder the progress of population and development initiatives. Lack of education limits access to information, skills development, and decision-making power. Education is a key factor that influences population dynamics. Repeatedly, surveys have revealed that low education attainment, especially among women, has contributed to high fertility rates in Pakistan, making it difficult to achieve the goals of ICPD PoA. The key challenges in achieving the desired targets regarding improvement in the Education sector follow.



- Limited access to education, especially for girls: There are still significant disparities in access to education in Pakistan, with many girls and women unable to access education due to social and cultural barriers. Many schools in Pakistan lack basic infrastructure such as buildings, furniture, and sanitation facilities. Inadequate infrastructure, especially in rural and remote areas, poses challenges in delivering quality education and building future human resources. The low teacher–student ratio has marred the quality of teaching and learning, which needs policy attention. There is also a low motivation to educate girls, resulting in missed learning and education opportunities. Furthermore, the inequity in girls' middle and secondary levels due to low investment in middle and higher education institutions persists.
- Socio-cultural factors such as early marriage, gender-based violence, and harmful traditional practices prevent girls from attending school. The lack of addressing these factors through public awareness campaigns, community engagement, and legal reforms remains challenging to create a more supportive environment for girls' education. Poverty is a major barrier to education, especially for girls. Financial incentives such as scholarships, stipends,

¹⁴ National Education Management Information System (NEMIS), Academy of Educational Planning & Management Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training. (January 2021). Pakistan Education Statistics 2017-18 (AEPAM Publication No. 291).

¹⁵ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (2019-20). Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division. July - 2021.

¹⁶ ASER Pakistan. (2022). Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Pakistan 2021: National (Rural). Lahore: ASER Pakistan Secretariat, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA).

¹⁷ ASER Pakistan. (2022). Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Pakistan 2021: National (Rural). Lahore: ASER Pakistan Secretariat, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)

and cash transfers could also help reduce the financial burden on families and increase girls' access to education remained relatively low. Furthermore, over the years, in several parts of Pakistan, especially in conflict-affected areas, the security situation was a major barrier to access education, especially for girls. Addressing security concerns through increased policing and community engagement did help to make schools safer and accessible for girls.

- Pakistan lacks trained and qualified teachers in many schools, especially rural areas. Addressing the shortage of qualified and trained teachers remains

a significant challenge for Pakistan, which has been addressed by focusing on teacher training and professional development programs, but resource scarcity persists. Education did not receive due priority, reflected in inadequate funding for education that resulted in a resource gap and limited infrastructure development.

- The lack of comprehensive and disaggregated data poses challenges in identifying gaps and formulating evidence-based policies. Additionally, insufficient political support and coordination among ministries involved in education hinder progress.

3.5 GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Pakistan has made important strides in gender equality and women's empowerment through various legislation, policies, strategies, and programs. These initiatives have played a crucial role in promoting women's rights, protecting them from discrimination and violence, and fostering their socio-economic empowerment. Following are the key features of some of these measures and their impact on gender empowerment, supported by relevant statistics:

- At the national level, the National Gender Policy Framework provides a comprehensive roadmap for gender mainstreaming in all sectors. It aims to eliminate gender disparities and promote gender equality in education, health, employment, and governance. This policy has contributed to increasing women's participation in decision-making positions, with the representation of women in the National Assembly reaching 21 per cent in 2021.
- Pakistan has undertaken legislative reforms to enhance gender equality and protect women's rights (at federal and provincial levels). The passage of laws such as the Protection of Women against Harassment at Workplace Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act aimed to address issues like violence against women, workplace harassment, and acid attacks.
- Education and Skills Development: The government has focused on increasing girls' enrollment and retention in schools, providing scholarships, and establishing girls' schools in underserved areas. Skill development programs and vocational training opportunities have been initiated to enhance women's employability. Furthermore, implementing the Single

National Curriculum 2020 is a significant step towards gender equality in education. The Single National Curriculum promotes inclusive and equitable education for all, eliminating gender stereotypes and biases from textbooks. This initiative aims to provide equal educational opportunities for boys and girls, fostering a more inclusive and empowering learning environment.

- At the provincial level, Punjab has implemented the Punjab Women Development Policy 2018, focusing on women's empowerment, protection, and participation in various sectors. The policy emphasizes women's economic empowerment, with initiatives like the Punjab Women Property Rights Act 2021 ensuring their inheritance rights. These measures have improved women's access to economic resources and decision-making processes. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has enacted the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Empowerment Policy 2017, which aims to empower women socially, economically, and politically. The policy focuses on women's participation in governance, education, health, and economic development. As a result, the female labour force participation rate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa increased from 13.9 per cent in 2010 to 17 per cent in 2020.

Table 11.

Province wise initiatives for Gender Equality & Women Empowerment in Pakistan (2013-23)

Province	Policies/Programs
National Level	National Gender Policy Framework National Child Marriage Restrain Act 2019 National Policy on Development and Empowerment of Women The Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010, Amendment 2017 The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2016 (increased the punishment for rape and other forms of sexual violence) The Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Amendment) Act, 2017 The Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act, 2016 The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) (Amendment) Bill, 2017 The National Commission on the Status of Women (Amendment) Act, 2017 The National Commission for Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2017 Pakistan Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020
Punjab	The Punjab Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2014 Punjab Child Marriage Restrain (Amendment) Act 2015 Punjab Women Development Policy 2018 Punjab Women Property Rights Act 2021
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	KPK Women Empowerment Policy 2017 KPK Family Courts Act, 2013 KPK Women Property Rights Act 2019
Sindh	The Sindh Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013 Sindh Child Marriage Restrain Act 2013 Sindh Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy 2020
Balochistan	The Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2014 Balochistan Child Marriage Prohibition Bill 2017

- Sindh has implemented the Sindh Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy 2020, which aims to eliminate gender disparities and ensure women's equal participation and opportunities in all spheres of life. The policy addresses gender-based violence, promotes women's economic empowerment, and enhances political participation. Balochistan has taken steps to protect women's rights through the Balochistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2014 and the Balochistan Child Marriage Prohibition Bill, 2017. These legislations contribute to safeguarding women's rights and creating a supportive environment for their empowerment. These legislations, policies, and programs reflect Pakistan's commitment to gender empowerment and equality.
- Economic Empowerment: Initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment through the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) provides cash transfers to vulnerable women and aim to uplift them socioeconomically. The Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Program includes measures to support women entrepreneurs and provide them with business loans.
- Awareness and Advocacy: Civil society organizations, women's rights groups, and the media have played a crucial role in raising awareness about gender equality issues, advocating for policy changes, and challenging societal norms and discriminatory practices. Public awareness and understanding of gender equality have been enhanced through awareness campaigns, community engagement, and educational programs. Efforts have been made to promote a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation and involvement of women, particularly marginalized and vulnerable.
- Overall political support related to gender equality and women's empowerment: Pakistan has made significant progress in garnering political support for gender equality. This includes enacting laws and policies to protect women's rights and establishing dedicated bodies and commissions to promote gender empowerment. High-level commitment and advocacy have helped create an enabling environment for gender equality initiatives.



Despite the challenges posed by disasters, emergencies, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan has strived to ensure the implementation of programs on gender equality and women's empowerment. Measures such as adapting interventions to the changing circumstances, prioritizing women's health and safety, and addressing the challenges women face during crises have been undertaken.

Challenges

3.5 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Gender equality remains a critical area to be focused on in Pakistan. While progress has been made in increasing women's access to education and workforce participation, gender disparities persist in various aspects of life, including opportunities, education, health services, decision-making, violence against women, and unequal access to resources and development areas.



- Pakistan has enacted several legislations to empower women and for gender equality. Implementing these legislations has been challenging in Pakistan; establishing or strengthening institutions responsible for overseeing and implementing women empowerment laws and policies remains challenging.
- Several district-level staff (of Social Welfare) lack adequate training and capacity to meet job descriptions addressing violence against women and issues arising therefrom. The absence of training and capacity-building programs for relevant stakeholders, including government officials, law enforcement agencies, and judicial personnel, hinders their understanding of women's rights and their roles in implementing the legislation effectively.
- Lack of effective enforcement of laws enacted in Pakistan through training law enforcement agencies and social welfare staff, promoting gender-sensitive approaches, and establishing special units or cells dedicated to addressing violence and discrimination against women remains a serious challenge.
- The current situation in Pakistan reflects gender disparities in education, especially towards girls' education. Poverty, cultural norms, early marriages, and lack of infrastructure contribute to low school enrolment and high dropout rates among girls.
- Women in Pakistan face barriers to economic empowerment, including limited job opportunities, gender pay gaps, and lack of access to credit and financial resources.
- Deep-rooted patriarchal norms and discriminatory practices continue to hinder women's progress in various spheres of life.
- Pakistan grapples with high rates of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, honour killings, and forced marriages.
- Limited access to quality healthcare services, especially in rural areas, challenges women's reproductive health and well-being.
- Despite legislative measures to increase women's political representation, women still face challenges accessing leadership positions and decision-making roles in Pakistan.
- Insufficient gender-disaggregated data and limited monitoring mechanisms make tracking progress difficult and identifying specific areas requiring interventions. Strengthening data collection systems to address these gaps in implementing women empowerment laws is a big challenge.

3.6 ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Pakistan's adolescent and youth population has been growing rapidly in recent years, and this demographic shift has important implications for implementing the ICPD agenda. Pakistan has a significant youth bulge, with a large proportion of its population under 25. According to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2017–18, the youth population (15–24 years) accounted for around 20 per cent of the total population in Pakistan. Pakistan's Youth Development Index is 0.517 (Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index and Report, 2020), and the country ranks 162 out of 181 countries.

Overall, Pakistan's growing youth and adolescent population highlights the need for targeted interventions and policies that address their growing needs, promote their rights, and harness their potential as agents of positive change. It requires a multi-sectoral approach involving government, civil society organizations, and development partners to effectively implement the ICPD agenda and create an enabling environment for youth development.

Youth is a devolved subject, whereby provinces hold autonomy to initiate their own policies regarding the demographic. At present, only Punjab, Sindh and KPK have youth policies in place.

Pakistan has undertaken concrete initiatives focusing on the large youth population. These initiatives and programs aim to address the challenges faced by the youth in Pakistan by providing them with opportunities for skill development, entrepreneurship, higher education, and financial support and include:

- Prime Ministers Youth Programme instituted in 2013 has achieved great strides, bringing programme and policy attention towards youth development. In 2019, the programme developed the first National Youth Development Framework. A National Youth Council was notified in 2021 and 2 cohorts have served on the platform since.
- Prime Minister's Youth Program includes schemes to empower youth in different economic areas. These schemes include the Prime Minister's Youth Loan Scheme, which provides loans to young entrepreneurs to start their businesses, and the Prime Minister's Youth Training Scheme (Ba-Ikhtiyar Naujawan Internship Program), which offers internships to fresh graduates for skills development.
- National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) promotes technical and vocational education and training in Pakistan. It offers skill development programs and vocational training courses to equip young individuals with employable skills.
- Startup Pakistan aims to promote entrepreneurship and innovation among the youth. It provides support and mentorship to young entrepreneurs and facilitates the establishment and growth of startups in various sectors.
- The Higher Education Commission (HEC) promotes and regulates higher education in Pakistan.
- It offers talented students scholarships and financial assistance programs, enabling them to pursue higher education and acquire advanced skills.
- Various organizations and NGOs in Pakistan, such as the National Youth Assembly and the Punjab Youth Affairs Department, offer skill development programs targeting the youth. These programs provide training in different fields, including IT, agriculture, healthcare, and hospitality, to enhance employability.
- Youth-led organizations and networks have emerged in Pakistan, advocating for the rights and well-being of young people. These networks play a crucial role in raising awareness, promoting peer education.
- Pakistan has worked towards establishing youth-friendly health services that cater to the specific needs of adolescents and young people. Efforts are also made to engage boys and men in discussions and programs about gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, and ending harmful gender norms and practices.
- Pakistan recognizes the potential of digital platforms and technology in reaching and engaging young people. Mobile applications, online platforms, and social media have disseminated information, provided counselling services, and created safe spaces for young people to access resources and connect with peers.

- Women Entrepreneurship Program, launched by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, aims to support and promote women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. It provides training, mentorship, and financial assistance to women who want to start or expand their businesses.
- Women Development Department functions in all provinces of Pakistan and focuses on women's empowerment. It implements programs and projects providing young women with skill development, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Women's Chambers of Commerce and Industry, such as the Karachi Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Lahore Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, provide a platform for women entrepreneurs to network, access business support services, and receive mentorship and guidance.
- Higher Education Commission (HEC) Scholarships for women pursuing higher education in various fields. These scholarships aim to increase the representation of women in higher education and support their academic and professional growth.
- Empowerment through Skill Enhancement and Economic Transformation (ESEET) is a program initiated by the Punjab Skills Development Fund that focuses on providing young women with technical and vocational training. It equips them with skills that enhance their employability and economic independence.



These initiatives and programs recognize the importance of empowering women in Pakistan and provide them with targeted support, guidance, and resources to overcome barriers and achieve their goals.

Challenges

3.6 Adolescents and Young People

- Reproductive Health: With a growing adolescent population, there is a need to prioritize comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and services for young people. This includes access to accurate information, contraception, and prevention of early marriages, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections.
- Limited Youth-Friendly Health Services: Adequate and accessible youth-friendly health services that address the specific needs of adolescents and young people are lacking in many areas of Pakistan. Limited availability of confidential services, trained healthcare providers, and appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health contribute to the challenges faced by young people.
- Education and Employment: Economic constraints and lack of employment opportunities pose significant challenges to the well-being and development of young people. Limited job prospects, especially for those with lower education and skills, can lead to economic insecurity, poverty, and vulnerability.
- Pakistan has faced barriers towards gender equality, for which various provincial Legislative bodies, including early-age child marriage, discrimination against women in the job market, harassment in the work environment, etc., have enacted legislation. Gender disparities, such as lower female labour force participation and limited access to education and employment opportunities for youth and women, have hindered the country's ability to utilize its demographic potential fully.
- Most schools in Pakistan, in both public and private sectors, do not have comprehensive health education programs to cater health needs of school children. Most health education printed material does not allow interactive communication and lacks age-specific content reflecting the low quality of available resources.



Overall, Pakistan's growing youth and adolescent population highlights the need for targeted interventions and policies that address their growing needs, promote their rights, and harness their potential as agents of positive change.

3.7 URBANIZATION AND INTERNAL MIGRATION

Pakistan has experienced substantial urbanization and internal migration over the past decade, with a growing number of people moving from rural to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities, education, and improved living standards; pressure on basic amenities remains high. Nearly 40 per cent of Pakistan's population lives in urban areas. This proportion is expected to rise to nearly 50 per cent by 2050. Pakistan's major cities are among the least liveable in the world, with substantial portions of their populations deprived of essential municipal services like water, sanitation, and waste removal, which poses grave threats to public health. Ten major cities in Pakistan, including Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Peshawar, Multan, Hyderabad, Quetta and Islamabad, have witnessed the rapid urban expansion and the development of new urban centres. More than half (54 per cent) of the urban population resides in these ten cities (Census 2017).

Unplanned urban sprawl and congestion result from outdated land use planning and control practices, the uneven and patchy implementation of existing regulations, weak municipal governance, and the near-complete reliance of city finances on fiscal transfers from the federal government¹⁸. Pakistan has tried to enhance capacity development through training programs and education initiatives to equip professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to address the complexities of urbanization and internal migration. Pakistan has taken several successful initiatives in addressing challenges emerging from urbanization and internal migration, including:

- The Orangi Pilot Project is a community-led development initiative in Karachi that focuses on improving sanitation and housing conditions in low-income neighbourhoods. It involves active community participation, capacity building, and the provision of low-cost sanitation infrastructure. The project has successfully empowered communities and addressed the sanitation needs of informal settlements.
- Various low-cost housing schemes have been implemented in Pakistan to provide affordable housing options for low-income urban residents. These schemes aim to address the housing deficit and improve living conditions. Examples include the Naya Pakistan Housing Program, Ashiana Housing Scheme, and Apna Ghar Scheme, which offer subsidized housing units for low-income families.
- The Karachi Neighborhood Improvement Project (KNIP) is a World Bank-supported initiative that focuses on improving urban services, infrastructure, and public spaces in targeted neighbourhoods of Karachi. The project aims to enhance the quality of life for urban residents by providing better water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, and improved public spaces.
- The development of mass transit systems, such as the Metro Bus System in Lahore and Islamabad, Multan, and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Peshawar and Karachi, has improved urban mobility and reduced congestion in major cities. These systems provide efficient and affordable transportation options, making commuting easier for urban residents.
- Land regularization programs have been implemented to address issues related to informal settlements and slums. These initiatives aim to provide tenure security, access to essential services, and upgrade informal settlements to improve living conditions. Examples include the Karachi Urban Resources Project and the Land Regularization Program in Punjab.
- Engaging communities and stakeholders in the urban planning process has proven effective in promoting inclusive and sustainable urban development. Participatory approaches involve community consultations, citizen engagement, and the involvement of residents in decision-making processes related to urban development.
- Initiatives like the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority and urban industrial zones attract investments, foster economic growth, and provide employment opportunities, thus reducing unemployment and rural-urban migration.
- Pakistan has also approved several legislations, policies, and strategies for urbanisation and internal migration.
- Pakistan has focused on enhancing social services and urban healthcare to improve the quality of life in

¹⁸ Source: World Bank Group. Pakistan: Executive Summary. Country Climate and Development Report. Nov 2022

urban areas. Access to healthcare facilities has been improved, urban health centres are being established, and the delivery of healthcare services has been enhanced. Efforts have also been made to improve education, water supply, sanitation, and other essential services to meet the needs of the growing urban population. The private sector plays a key role in achieving these important achievements.

Overall, these achievements in urbanization and internal migration reflect the government's commitment to addressing the challenges associated with urban growth and migration. Through legislative measures, infrastructure development, housing schemes, urban governance, employment promotion, and social service enhancements, Pakistan has made noticeable progress in creating sustainable and inclusive urban environments.

Table 12.

Province wise initiatives for Urbanization & Internal Migration in Pakistan (2013-23)

Province	Policies/Programs
Punjab	In Punjab, the Punjab Urban and Peri-Urban Forest Policy 2019 focuses on preserving and enhancing forest cover in urban and peri-urban areas. This policy promotes sustainable forest management, reforestation, and afforestation initiatives. By developing green spaces within urban areas, this policy contributes to improved urban environments and the overall well-being of urban residents.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	With legislation such as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Areas Development Authorities Act 2020, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has taken significant steps towards proper urbanization. This legislation provides a framework for establishing and functioning urban development authorities and facilitating urban planning, development, and management. The authorities are empowered to enforce building regulations and ensure compliance with urban development standards, leading to sustainable and regulated urban growth.
Sindh	In Sindh, the Sindh Master Plan Authority Act 2020 establishes the Sindh Master Plan Authority responsible for formulating and implementing comprehensive master plans for urban areas. This legislation guides systematic and planned urban development, addressing land use, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. It is vital in guiding urban growth and improving the quality of life for urban dwellers in Sindh.

Challenges

3.7 Urbanization and Internal Migration

Pakistan has been grappling with the challenges of rapid urbanization and internal migration. Urbanization and internal migration pose several challenges in managing urban infrastructure, housing, and sanitation, providing essential services, and addressing the needs of growing urban populations. Some of the key challenges include:



- Rapid urbanization has put immense pressure on existing urban infrastructure, leading to housing, transportation, water supply, sanitation, and other basic services deficits. Insufficient infrastructure has resulted in overcrowding, inadequate living conditions, and a lack of access to essential amenities in many urban areas.
- The influx of migrants into urban areas has contributed to the growth of informal settlements and slums. These areas often lack basic services, proper housing, and tenure security, leading to poverty, social exclusion, and substandard living conditions for residents. Upgrading and providing services to informal settlements is a significant challenge for Pakistan.

- Pakistan's governance and institutional framework for managing urbanization have faced coordination, policy implementation, and enforcement challenges. Weak urban governance systems, absence of Local Governments, lack of capacity among urban local bodies, and limited resources have hindered effective urban management and service delivery.
- There are disparities in access to urban services and amenities, with marginalized and low-income populations often facing limited access to essential services such as water, sanitation, healthcare, and education. Inadequate social services and infrastructure provision in low-income areas have contributed to inequalities within urban areas.
- Rapid urbanization has placed significant stress on the environment, including increased pollution levels, depletion of natural resources, serious encroachment of farmlands to meet urban housing needs and environmental degradation. Balancing urban development with environmental sustainability has been challenging, requiring comprehensive planning and implementation of sustainable urban practices.

3.8 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

With ever increasing demand for skilled labour in many Middle East and Gulf Countries, international migrants were taken as a priority area under APMD 2013 for several reasons. The APMD recognizes the importance of safeguarding the rights and well-being of migrants and aims to harness the positive impacts of migration on development while mitigating potential challenges. The APMD emphasizes the need for regional cooperation and dialogue on migration issues, encourages collaboration among countries, and recognizes the need to effectively manage demographic changes emerging from international migration, considering their implications for social and economic development, health, education, and other sectors.

- International migration impacts Pakistan in several ways: Remittances, brain drain and brain gain, labour market dynamics, socio-cultural dynamics, protection of migrants, and security-induced migration.
- Pakistan is one of the top recipient countries of remittances, with a significant portion coming from overseas Pakistani workers.
- Pakistan experiences the emigration of skilled professionals and the return of skilled migrants who bring valuable knowledge, skills, and experiences that can contribute to the country's development and provides employment opportunities for Pakistanis.
- International migration led to demographic dynamics in terms of males leaving for longer and leaving women, in many cases, as head of the household, which influences Pakistan's social and cultural fabric.
- Return migrants, who are exposed to different cultures, can contribute to cultural diversity.
- Pakistan geared its skill enhancement programs by building several training institutes catering to the skilled labour demands of various countries.
- The Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act 2018 was passed to deter and punish the smuggling of migrants, which poses risks to the lives and well-being of individuals seeking to migrate. The key features of this legislation include the criminalization of migrant smuggling, the imposition of penalties and fines on offenders, and the establishment of dedicated anti-smuggling units to investigate and prosecute cases related to migrant smuggling. The Act also strengthens international cooperation and collaboration to combat this transnational crime. It emphasizes the importance of providing protection and assistance to smuggling victims, including their safe repatriation and reintegration into society. The Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act, 2018, reflects Pakistan's commitment to addressing the challenges associated with irregular migration and protecting the rights and well-being of migrants within its jurisdiction.
- Pakistan developed and implemented policies and regulations related to emigration, including the Emigration Ordinance and the Emigration Rules.
- Pakistan entered bilateral agreements with several destination countries to facilitate its citizens' legal and safe migration.
- Efforts have been made to protect the rights of Pakistani migrants through various means.

- Pakistan has taken steps to facilitate and promote the flow of remittances by improving financial infrastructure, offering incentives for formal channels, and ensuring ease of transfer.
- Pakistan introduced reintegration programs to assist returning migrants in their reintegration into society.

Challenges

3.8 International Migration

Pakistan has witnessed tremendous growth in international migration that started in the 1970s, which led to millions of workers migrating for work to several countries. During this tremendous progress, several challenges have emerged in effectively managing international migration. Some of the key challenges include:



- Pakistan experiences a significant brain drain as skilled professionals and educated individuals seek better opportunities and higher wages abroad. Brain drain has had negative consequences for Pakistan as it hampers the availability of a skilled workforce and intellectual capital within Pakistan. The phenomenon affects many domestic sectors, such as healthcare, engineering, and information technology, leading to a shortage of skilled professionals and hindering domestic capacity-building.
- Migrants often face labour exploitation, discrimination, non-payment of wages, and limited access to social protection, particularly in low-skilled and informal sectors. They may encounter labour rights violations, including non-payment or underpayment of wages, long working hours, poor working conditions, and limited healthcare and social protection access. Strengthening mechanisms for monitoring and safeguarding the rights of migrants is crucial.
- Limited legal pathways for migration pose a challenge for individuals seeking to migrate legally. This may lead to a higher propensity for irregular migration, as people opt for unsafe and unauthorized means to reach their desired destinations. Irregular or undocumented migration has been a significant challenge for Pakistan, where individuals migrate illegally or without proper documentation. This poses risks to the safety, security, and well-being of migrants, as they may fall prey to human trafficking, exploitation, and abuse.
- Protecting the rights and well-being of vulnerable migrants, including women, children, and unaccompanied minors, is a key challenge. Ensuring their safety, access to justice, and provision of necessary support and services requires robust policies, legal frameworks, and practical implementation.
- Returnee migrants face difficulties finding suitable employment and reintegrating into their communities due to skills mismatch, limited support services, and social stigma.
- Social Integration: Ensuring the successful social integration of Pakistani migrants in host countries can be challenging. Language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination may hinder their access to education, healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities, affecting their overall well-being and integration into local communities.
- Remittance Management: While remittances from Pakistani migrants play a significant role in the country's economy, managing and maximizing the impact of these remittances can be challenging. Ensuring that remittances are utilized effectively for development purposes, such as investment in productive sectors and poverty reduction, requires appropriate policies and mechanisms.
- Insufficient data and research on migration trends, patterns, and the socio-economic impact of migration pose challenges for evidence-based policy-making.
- Weak coordination and cooperation between various stakeholders have existed and are crucial for effectively addressing migration-related challenges.
- Over the last several decades, Pakistan has hosted many refugees, mainly from neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan. Providing support and assistance to refugees while managing the socio-economic impact on host communities has been challenging for Pakistan.
- Pakistan has faced security threats from various sources, and managing immigration processes while maintaining national security is crucial.

- The proximity of Pakistan to countries with high trafficking rates, such as Afghanistan and Iran, contributes to the challenge of cross-border smuggling and human trafficking.
- Pakistan shares borders with neighbouring countries and effectively manages these borders to prevent irregular migration, human trafficking, and smuggling of migrants, but it poses a considerable challenge. Strengthening border control measures, improving surveillance, and enhancing cooperation with neighbouring countries is crucial in addressing these challenges.

3.9 POPULATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Pakistan has made noteworthy achievements in population management and sustainable development by implementing various policies, laws, strategies, and programs at the national and provincial levels. By integrating population dynamics, reproductive health, and gender equality into development plans, promoting women's empowerment, and incorporating renewable energy initiatives, Pakistan has been making important progress in the area of population and sustainable development since the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference. These efforts aim to address the rising population growth rate, integrate sustainable development goals, promote women's empowerment, and incorporate renewable energy initiatives. Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to addressing population challenges and achieving sustainable development through these policies, strategies, and programs.

- As part of the CPEC initiative, significant investments have been made in infrastructure development, energy projects, and industrial zones in less-developed regions of Pakistan, such as Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The provincial government has launched a district-specific development framework to focus on the needs and challenges of individual districts. These programs prioritize allocating resources for critical sectors like education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure development based on the specific requirements of each district.
- Special Economic Zones have been established in various regions, including underdeveloped areas, to attract investment and promote industrial growth.
- Special development programs have been initiated to address the socio-economic challenges faced by the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. These programs focus on infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and skill development to uplift the living standards of the local population.
- NRSP is a non-governmental organization that alleviates poverty and empowers rural communities.
- They implement various projects in remote and underdeveloped areas, such as livelihood enhancement, community development, women empowerment, and provision of basic services, to improve the socio-economic conditions of rural populations.
- Efforts have been made to improve access to quality education in remote and underserved areas. Initiatives like establishing schools, providing free textbooks, and stipends for female students aim to bridge the education gap between different regions and promote educational opportunities for all.
- Pakistan has adopted a comprehensive approach to population management at the national level through the National Action Plan for Population 2018–24. This plan outlines strategies to improve access to family planning services, enhance reproductive health, and promote maternal and child health. Furthermore, Pakistan has aligned its national development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), encompassing poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, gender equality, and environmental conservation. By integrating population dynamics, gender equality, and reproductive health into the national agenda, Pakistan aims to achieve sustainable development.

- Women's empowerment and gender equality have received significant attention in Pakistan's efforts, and initiatives have focused on improving women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, contributing to sustainable development. Recommendations provided by the Task Force on Human Rights in 2018 are guidelines for promoting human rights, including reproductive rights and women's empowerment, aligned with the sustainable development agenda.
- Pakistan has faced challenges in population management and sustainable development, but it has also learned valuable lessons that can be shared with other countries. Lessons such as community engagement, public-private partnerships, advocacy and awareness campaigns, and the integration of goals provide insights into addressing challenges related to access, resources, cultural norms, and coordination.
- Effectiveness of community-based approaches, which have proven successful in reaching remote and underserved populations. By training and engaging local community members as health workers or volunteers, Pakistan has provided reproductive health information, distributed contraceptives, and offered basic healthcare services at the grassroots level. This approach addresses the challenge of limited access to healthcare services, especially in rural areas.
- Collaborations between the public and private sectors and partnerships with NGOs, healthcare providers, and corporate entities have expanded the reach of reproductive health services in Pakistan. These partnerships addressed the challenge of limited resources and helped to mobilize additional support and expertise.
- Advocacy and awareness campaigns have also significantly impacted Pakistan's population and development efforts. These campaigns have raised awareness about population-related challenges and addressed cultural and social barriers. By dispelling myths and promoting the benefits of family planning, reproductive health, and gender equality, Pakistan has tackled the challenge of cultural and social norms that hinder progress in these areas.
- The integration of health and development goals has been another crucial lesson learned. Pakistan has recognized the importance of aligning population programs with broader health and development frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national development agendas. This integration allows for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to address population-related challenges. Pakistan has overcome the challenge of fragmented approaches and siloed initiatives by addressing multiple development aspects simultaneously.

Table 13.

Province wise initiatives for Population and Sustainable Development in Pakistan (2013-23)

Province	Policies/Programs
Punjab	In Punjab, the Punjab Population Policy 2017 emphasizes effective family planning programs, maternal and child healthcare services, and reproductive rights. The establishment of Adolescent Health Centers in the province addresses the specific needs of adolescents, including reproductive health. The Punjab Family Planning Program 2020 aims to improve access to family planning services and promote contraceptive use.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) has adopted the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Population Policy 2015, focusing on family planning, maternal and child health services, and reproductive rights. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sustainable Development Strategy 2019–23 outlines the province's development goals and priorities: poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, gender equality, and environmental conservation.
Sindh	Sindh's Population Policy 2016 addresses population-related challenges through family planning programs, improved maternal and child healthcare services, and reproductive rights.
Balochistan	In Balochistan, the Balochistan Partnership for Sustainable Development 2013 fosters collaboration between the government, civil society, and the private sector to achieve sustainable development. The Balochistan SDGs Accelerated Delivery Project 2014–19 focuses on poverty reduction, education, healthcare, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.



Provincial governments have also played a crucial role in population management and sustainable development.

Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to addressing population challenges and achieving sustainable development through these policies, strategies, and programs. By integrating population dynamics, reproductive health, and gender equality into development plans, promoting women's empowerment, and incorporating renewable energy initiatives, Pakistan has also made important progress in the area of population and sustainable development since 2013 APMC.

- Formulation of Population Policy documents by provinces and federal government
- Pakistan took several steps to promote women's empowerment and gender equality by improving women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.
- Pakistan has focused on sustainable urban planning and development to accommodate the growing population pressure on urban centres.
- Pakistan has made strides in promoting renewable energy sources to address energy needs and contribute to sustainable development.
- To address environmental challenges and promote sustainable resource management, initiatives have been taken, including massive tree plantation and forest conservation, water resource management, and awareness campaigns for environmental protection.

Challenges

3.9 Population and Sustainable Development

Pakistan has one of the highest population growth rates in the world, which poses significant challenges to sustainable development. Rapid population growth placed tremendous pressure on resources, infrastructure, healthcare systems, and social services. Furthermore, maternal and child health issues, poverty and inequality, limited access to reproductive health services, and low levels of education and literacy are among the key challenges faced. Additionally, adopting renewable energy initiatives has presented its hurdles, including financing availability, technical capacity building, policy framework development, land suitability, and promoting the benefits of renewable energy. Pakistan has encountered various challenges in implementing population and sustainable development programs.



- Important barriers to reproductive health services, particularly in rural and marginalized areas yet need to be addressed. Limited availability of family planning methods, inadequate infrastructure, cultural and social norms, and gender disparities contribute to low contraceptive prevalence rates and unintended pregnancies.
- Maternal mortality and infant mortality rates are relatively high compared to global standards. Limited access to quality healthcare services contributes to these challenges, especially in rural areas. Adequate healthcare infrastructure, skilled birth attendants, and improved antenatal and postnatal care are essential for addressing these issues.
- Pakistan faces significant poverty and income inequality challenges. Poverty and limited economic opportunities affect access to education, healthcare, and other essential services, impacting population and development outcomes. Reducing poverty and promoting inclusive economic growth is vital for sustainable development.

- Low literacy rates, particularly among women and marginalized communities, hinder the progress of population and development initiatives. Support provided under BISP only partially addressed the poverty eradication goal as lack of education limits access to information, skills development, and decision-making power. Investing in quality education and promoting literacy is essential for addressing these challenges.
- Inadequate infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas, poses challenges in delivering healthcare, education, and other essential services. Limited access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and transportation affects the population's well-being and hinders development efforts.
- Establishment of a robust monitoring mechanisms is among pre-requisites to address the gaps and track progress in population and development indicators.

3.10 DATA AND STATISTICS

Over the years, Pakistan has made valuable progress/advancement in data and statistics in improving the data systems, creating a better understanding of output and outcome indicators, data collection and analysis, and ultimately its utilization to support evidence-based decision-making for remedial actions and policy formulation. Some key advancements include:

- Pakistan has established effective national-level data collection systems for comprehensive demographic and health-related information and implemented integrated household surveys that collect a wide range of data on population, health, education, employment, and other socio-economic factors such as Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS), the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) survey, and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which provide valuable data on population dynamics, health indicators, and socioeconomic factors and is used to inform policies and programs across multiple sectors.
- Pakistan has made efforts to strengthen the data infrastructure, including enhancing data management systems, establishing data repositories, and improving data quality and reliability. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) has a well-established organization and has gained tremendous capacity in undertaking Housing and Population Censuses (2017 and 2023), besides Labour Force Surveys and Pakistan Demographic Surveys, on a routine basis. PBS coordinates data collection and analysis efforts across various sectors. PBS also collects and publishes family planning performance reports from all local Populations and Health Depts.
- Provincial Education and Health Departments gather sectoral information from their service outlets transmitted from District Authority Offices. These MISs are upgraded with electronic gadgets rather than paper-based registers and monitored by District Management for quick decision-making for Program improvements.
- Collaborative efforts among government agencies, research institutions, and development partners have been strengthened to enhance data collection, analysis, and utilization. The national registration data is available to specific government bodies to target specific households for poverty-oriented programs (like BISP) and the Ehsaas program. Data linkages between health, education, and other sectors help identify multi-dimensional factors influencing population and development outcomes.
- Standardization of birth and death notification formats for health sectors to obtain comparable data as per international standards has been recently completed.
- Policymakers and civil society organizations strongly support and increasingly emphasize data disaggregation, particularly by age, gender, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. Such disaggregated data helps identify disparities, vulnerabilities, and specific needs of different population groups, enabling targeted interventions and inclusive development policies. Social activists, civil society organizations, and concerned government departments use the data to target vulnerable and poor population segments. Data disaggregation, focusing on age, gender, geography, and socioeconomic status,

has allowed for a more nuanced understanding of population dynamics and identifying specific needs and inequalities.

- Pakistan has increasingly recognized the importance of using data to inform policy formulation and program implementation. Data and statistics are utilized to identify areas for urgent attention, monitor progress, and evaluate the impact of interventions. This data-driven approach contributes to evidence-based decision-making and effective resource allocation.
- Efforts were made to make online portals and databases with aggregated data for policymakers, researchers, and the general public for increased use for evidence-based decision-making.
- Provincial Bureaus of Statistics are the backbone of provincial Planning Departments but are faced with limited resources (human and financial). Capacity-building initiatives have been undertaken to enhance the skills and knowledge of data collectors, analysts, and policymakers. Training programs, workshops, and technical assistance are being provided to strengthen data collection methodologies, data analysis techniques, and data utilization skills.
- Collaboration between the government of Pakistan and development partners, such as the United Nations agencies and international organizations, has facilitated technical assistance, resource mobilization, and knowledge sharing in data and statistics. These partnerships support implementing best practices and strengthen the country's data systems. This has been an effective way of collaboration to strengthen the Pakistan Data and Statistics System.
- The District Health Information System (DHIS) play a significant role in decision-making by health managers. It provides an effective platform for collecting health data from different public sector health facilities, including hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries in urban and rural areas. The data collected through these systems cover various aspects of health, including disease surveillance, immunization coverage, maternal and child health, and service delivery statistics. The use of GPS to track field monitoring was highly successful and initiated by the Department of Health across Punjab.
- Various legislations, policies, and strategies at both the national and provincial levels have supported the achievements in data and statistics. These include the Data Protection Act, Right to Information Act, and National Data Repository Ordinance at the national level. Provinces like Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Balochistan have also implemented policies and acts that promote data governance, access, and utilization. These legal frameworks and policies have created an enabling environment for effective data management and utilization.



In summary, Pakistan has made remarkable strides in data and statistics, leveraging comprehensive surveys, national databases, disaggregation, open data initiatives, capacity building, and collaboration with development partners. These achievements have strengthened evidence-based decision-making, informed policy formulation, and improved program implementation.

Challenges

3.10 Data and Statistics

Pakistan reflects good progress in the area of data and statistics. Several challenges still exist in data and statistics that need urgent attention.



- Strengthening and capacity building for individuals and institutions involved in data collection, analysis, and utilization is crucial. Pakistan has been actively investing in capacity-building programs to enhance the skills and competencies of data professionals and policymakers. Improving data coverage and representativeness, enhancing data disaggregation to capture vulnerable and marginalized populations, ensuring data accuracy and reliability, and strengthening data integration across different sectors are issues that need attention. Limited data collection, processing, and analysis poses challenge Pakistan's overall data landscape. Provincial Bureaus of Statistics need capacity building and technical support to play their required role in contributing to evidence-based planning and implementation of Population and Sustainable Development goals.
- Resource mobilization and allocation need to be prioritized to address these constraints. Increased investment in data infrastructure and technology is crucial for overcoming various issues and ensuring the availability of reliable data for informed decision-making.
- For sustainable growth and better-informed policies of the sector, improved and continued attention using domestic resources for data infrastructure, capacity building, and interagency collaboration are essential for Pakistan. Lower attention and investment in the area has challenged the strengthen process of statistical systems (based on surveys and MISs) for effective monitoring and evaluation of population and development programs.
- Data sharing between the public and private sectors is a major challenge. The reluctance to share performance data with the government includes a lack of trust, perceived benefits of sharing, regulatory and legal considerations, confidentiality, and competitive advantage.
- Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system in Pakistan has witnessed improvement, yet gaps remain in achieving adequate completeness of births, deaths, marriage and divorce registrations¹⁹. The recent Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–18 revealed that only 42 per cent of children under five years were registered, with considerable disparities between urban and rural areas and socio-economic and regional differentials. The registration rate of children under five years saw only an eight per cent increase over the last decade, indicating the challenges faced in improving birth registration rates in the country²⁰. The death registration situation is extremely critical as less than five per cent of deaths in the country are currently being registered²¹.



In summary, while Pakistan faces challenges in data and statistics, efforts are being made to address them. Improving data quality and timeliness, enhancing data access and sharing, investing in capacity building, securing adequate resources, and promoting coordination and collaboration are key steps taken by Pakistan to mitigate these challenges. These initiatives aim to strengthen the data landscape, enhance data reliability, and enable evidence-based decision-making for sustainable development in the country.

¹⁹ Planning Commission of Pakistan. "Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) - About." Accessed June 2023

²⁰ Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives (2020). Gap Analysis of Current CRVS Registration Practices and Mapping of Potential Data-sources Focusing on Marginalized Populations in Pakistan. Islamabad

²¹ Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiative, Government of Pakistan. National Framework to Revamp and Reform CRVS in Pakistan. Islamabad: Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiative, Government of Pakistan]

3.11 AGEING

The proportion of the population aged 60 and above in Pakistan has gradually increased over the past decade²². The elderly population (60 years and above) constituted around eight per cent of the total population in Pakistan (PSLM 2018–19). The PDHS 2017-18 shows a 6.6 per cent population aged 60 and above. It is worth mentioning that while the proportion of the elderly population may not be as high as in some other countries, Pakistan is still likely to experience demographic shifts in the coming years. The federal government and various provincial governments have approved Senior Citizen Legislation, which is a positive step, but its implementation remains to be materialized.

As the proportion of the elderly population continues to grow, it becomes essential for Pakistan to address the specific needs and challenges this age group faces, such as healthcare, social support systems, pension schemes, and ensuring their overall well-being. Adequate policies and programs focused on elderly care and promoting active and healthy ageing will be crucial for addressing the emerging needs of the ageing population in Pakistan. The federal government and various provincial governments have approved Senior Citizen Legislation, which is a positive step, but its implementation remains to be materialized.

The government of Pakistan has made noteworthy achievements in addressing the needs of elderly persons through various legislation, policies, and strategies. The ICT Maintenance and Welfare of Old Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2019, along with the ICT Senior Citizens Board Act 2017 and ICT Senior Citizen Act 2020, demonstrate the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being and rights of older individuals. These acts provide a legal framework for protecting and maintaining elderly persons' rights, including financial security, healthcare, and social welfare.

- “Parental protection ordinance 2021” promulgated by the President of Pakistan is another milestone for the protection of the rights of elderly people.
- The federal and provincial governments have approved Senior Citizen Legislation (listed below), which is a positive step, but its implementation remains to be materialized.
- Efforts have been made to recruit and train healthcare professionals, social workers, and volunteers specializing in geriatric care.
- Another notable achievement is the implementation of social protection programs like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and the Ehsaas program. These initiatives aim to alleviate poverty and provide targeted financial assistance to vulnerable populations, including elderly persons.
- Additionally, efforts have been made to improve healthcare services for the elderly, focusing on addressing age-related health issues. This includes establishing specialized care facilities and programs catering to the specific health needs of older individuals. These initiatives have contributed to enhancing the overall quality of healthcare and ensuring the well-being of elderly persons.
- Civil society organizations and NGOs have played a vital role in raising awareness about the rights and needs of older persons in Pakistan. Through their advocacy efforts, these organizations have influenced policies and programs that address the social, economic, and health challenges that older individuals face. Their work has helped create a more inclusive and supportive environment for the elderly.

²² Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (2019-20). Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division. July - 2021.

Table 14.

Province wise initiatives for Senior Citizens in Pakistan (2013-23)

Province	Policies/Programs
Punjab	In Punjab, the Punjab Senior Citizen Bill 2013 has been enacted to safeguard the rights and interests of elderly persons. This legislation emphasizes providing healthcare, financial support, and social welfare services for older individuals in the province.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Senior Citizen Act 2014 and the establishment of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senior Citizen Council have been instrumental in promoting the welfare of older persons. The act outlines provisions for protecting elderly individuals' rights and sets up mechanisms for addressing their concerns. The council serves as a platform to address issues related to senior citizens and works towards improving their quality of life.
Sindh	Sindh has taken major steps by enacting the Sindh Senior Citizen Welfare Act 2014. This legislation aims to protect and promote the rights of senior citizens, ensuring their well-being and dignity. Additionally, establishing the Sindh Senior Citizen Portal and issuing the Senior Citizen Azaadi Card by NADRA (National Database and Registration Authority) further facilitate access to government services and benefits for older persons.
Balochistan	Balochistan approved the Balochistan Senior Citizen Act 2017, which focuses on the welfare and protection of elderly individuals in the province.



The government recognizes the importance of cross-ministerial coordination in effectively addressing older persons' needs. Efforts have been made to establish inter-ministerial committees or task forces that unite various government departments to coordinate and collaborate on ageing-related policies and programs.

Challenges

3.11 Ageing

Pakistan faces several challenges in addressing the needs of the elderly population. As the old-age population increases in Pakistan, it has various social, economic, and healthcare implications:



- There are limited age-friendly social services and infrastructure available to the elderly population in Pakistan, such as accessible transportation, housing, community centres, and recreational facilities that cater to the specific requirements of the elderly population. Specialized health and social care for the elderly population is limited.
- With an increasing number of elderly individuals, there may be a higher demand for pension and social security systems to provide financial support for retired individuals. This requires robust policies and programs to ensure older adults' economic well-being and social inclusion.
- An ageing population can lead to a shrinking workforce and potential labour shortages, as a smaller proportion of the population is in the working-age group. This can impact various sectors and may require adjustments in employment policies, such as extending the retirement age or promoting active ageing initiatives.
- Intergenerational relationships and family dynamics may change as the population ages. There may be increased responsibilities for younger generations to care for and support their elderly family members, which can affect family structures and societal norms.

- Limited human resources have adequate capacity to address issues arising from the ageing population.
- The lack of disaggregated data for evidence-based policymaking and planning remained another big challenge.



Pakistan policymakers, healthcare providers, and society need to anticipate and plan for the implications of an ageing population. This involves ensuring adequate healthcare services, social support systems, and policies that promote active and healthy ageing. By recognizing and addressing these implications, Pakistan can better prepare to meet the needs and rights of its ageing population in the future.

3.12 FOOD SECURITY

Pakistan is an agriculture-rich country with a significant population depending on it for food, employment, and livelihood. Food security has become a priority for Pakistan for several reasons, including high population growth, declining productivity, and several challenges Pakistan faces. Pakistan has made several efforts to address food security challenges in line with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) framework.

- Pakistan formulated a National Food Security Policy to improve food availability, accessibility, and affordability. The policy focuses on enhancing agricultural productivity, promoting sustainable farming practices, improving irrigation systems, and ensuring food safety.
- The government has implemented various agricultural development programs to enhance crop productivity and support small-scale farmers. These programs include initiatives for improved seed quality, irrigation infrastructure development, promotion of climate-resilient farming techniques, and provision of agricultural credit and subsidies.
- The government established agriculture extension services to help farmers adopt modern agricultural practices, improve crop yields, and enhance overall productivity.
- Improving irrigation infrastructure and water management has been a focus to enhance agricultural productivity.
- Recognizing the importance of nutrition in food security, Pakistan has implemented various interventions to address malnutrition, especially among marginalized and poor segments. The government implemented social safety net programs to address food insecurity and support vulnerable populations, including the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Ehsaas Program.
- Collaboration between the public and private sectors has been crucial in promoting food security. Partnerships have been formed to enhance agricultural productivity, improve value chains, strengthen market linkages, and promote agricultural research and innovation. This played a vital role in boosting agricultural productivity, improving value chains, and promoting investment in the food and agriculture sector.
- Community-based agriculture initiatives, such as Farmer Field Schools and community seed banks, have successfully promoted sustainable farming practices, preserved local seed varieties, and improved the resilience of farming communities.
- Community-based irrigation management systems, such as Water Users Associations, have been implemented to improve water management and ensure equitable distribution of water resources among farmers.
- Initiatives promoting climate-smart agriculture, such as conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and sustainable land management practices, have mitigated climate change, improved soil health, conserved water successfully, and increased.

Challenges

3.12 Food security

Achieving food security is a continuous process for which sustained efforts are needed to address emerging challenges, promote sustainable agriculture, and ensure the availability and access to nutritious food for all segments of the population in Pakistan. Pakistan faces several challenges in the food security sector that hinder the achievement of desired outcomes.



- Pakistan is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including erratic weather patterns, droughts, floods, and extreme temperatures. These events affect agricultural productivity, disrupt food supply chains, and lead to food insecurity.
- Pakistan had ample water supply through the five rivers, which now have less water than a few decades ago. Water scarcity is an important issue in Pakistan, particularly for agriculture, which relies heavily on irrigation. Limited access to water resources, inefficient irrigation practices, and a lack of water storage infrastructure pose challenges to sustainable food production.
- Soil erosion, salinity, and land degradation are prevalent issues in Pakistan. These factors have reduced the fertility of agricultural land and hamper crop productivity.
- Post-harvest losses due to inadequate storage facilities, inefficient supply chains, and improper handling contribute to food wastage in Pakistan. Addressing these issues is essential to reduce food losses and improve food security.
- Rapid population growth and urbanization pose severe pressure on food security. High population growth has led to increased demand for food, coupled with the encroachment of agricultural land and resources for urban development, presenting major challenges in addressing the growing population's nutritional needs and threatening farmers' livelihoods.
- Most farmers in Pakistan are smallholders who face challenges such as limited access to credit, modern agricultural techniques, and markets. Lack of proper infrastructure, extension services, and resources hinders their ability to improve productivity and income.

3.13 CLIMATE CHANGE

Pakistan is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts due to its geographical location and diverse ecosystems and like many other countries, falls within the context of the Climate Change-Population-Development (CCPD) linkages Framework. The framework applies to countries affected by climate change, have varied population dynamics, and aim for sustainable development.

'During Aug – Sept 2022, Pakistan experienced nearly threefold its 30-year average annual rainfall countrywide in 2022, with rainfall in Sindh and Balochistan approximately five times higher than average, resulting in massive floods causing major damage to approximately 3,150 miles of roads and at least 240 bridges across Pakistan. Pakistan sought humanitarian assistance for at least 80 districts in Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces and Gilgit-Baltistan Region. The government declared a state of emergency as 33 million people in Pakistan were affected by floods which claimed 1,731 flood-related deaths. Millions of people had to leave their homes and were homeless or lived in emergency shelters. Floods across Pakistan affect an estimated 33 million people; 2.3 million houses are damaged or destroyed due to the floods, and 20.6 m estimated people require humanitarian assistance. The government estimated the total damages due to flood above US\$ 30 billion.'

Pakistan also has a large and growing population, with demographic trends that impact development and climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. The country's population dynamics, including population size, growth rate, age structure, and migration patterns, are relevant in understanding the linkages between climate change and sustainable development.

In the case of Pakistan, the repercussions of the Climate Change-Population Dynamics-Sustainable Development framework are noteworthy. Pakistan has been adversely affected by climate change and has experienced several climate change events in the last decade²³. Pakistan ranks among the top 10 countries most affected by climate change and extreme weather events, underscoring the urgent need for prioritizing adaptation and resilience, including:

- Pakistan has witnessed severe heat waves recently, particularly in 2015 and 2019, which resulted in a significant number of heat-related deaths and heat-related illnesses, particularly among vulnerable populations.
- Flooding is a recurrent issue in Pakistan, exacerbated by climate change. The country has faced devastating floods, such as the 2010 floods, which affected millions of people, resulted in the loss of lives and infrastructure damage, and caused widespread displacement.
- Pakistan is home to several glaciers, and the melting of these glaciers due to rising temperatures has increased the risk of glacial lake outburst floods. Glacial lake outburst floods pose a threat to downstream communities and infrastructure. In 2010, the Attabad Lake outburst flood in Gilgit-Baltistan caused significant damage.
- Droughts have become more frequent and intense in some areas of Pakistan, particularly in the Balochistan and Sindh provinces. Prolonged dry spells have led to water scarcity, crop failures, livestock losses, and socioeconomic challenges for local communities.
- Climate change has influenced rainfall patterns in Pakistan, leading to irregular and unpredictable rainfall. This variability affects agriculture, water availability, and food security.
- Pakistan's coastal areas, particularly in Sindh and Balochistan, are vulnerable to sea-level rise. Increased coastal erosion, saline intrusion, and the risk of storm surges pose challenges to communities living in these regions.
- Climate change has adversely affected agriculture, a crucial sector of Pakistan's economy. Erratic rainfall patterns, droughts, and floods have led to crop failures, reduced yields, and increased vulnerability to pests and diseases. This has undermined food security and livelihoods, particularly in rural areas.
- Changing rainfall patterns and glacial melt have contributed to water scarcity in different parts of the country. Reduced water availability has impacted agriculture, hydropower generation, and access to clean drinking water, leading to socio-economic challenges for communities.
- Climate change impacts, such as extreme weather events and changes in agricultural patterns, can negatively affect livelihoods and economic opportunities, particularly in sectors dependent on natural resources. This can lead to a decline in agricultural productivity, loss of jobs, and income disparities, further exacerbating poverty and inequality.
- Climate change can disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including those living in poverty. Losing livelihoods, increased food insecurity, and inadequate access to essential services can deepen poverty and make communities more vulnerable to climate-related risks and shocks.
- Climate change can have significant implications for public health. Changes in temperature, precipitation patterns, and water availability can contribute to the spread of waterborne diseases, vector-borne diseases, respiratory illnesses and malnutrition. Disruptions to healthcare infrastructure and inadequate access to clean water and sanitation can exacerbate health risks, especially for pregnant women and young children. Disruption in contraceptive supplies due to floods is noted to have led to a rise in unintended pregnancies and abortions.
- Climate change disrupts ecosystems and accelerates environmental degradation, including forests, wetlands, marine environments and depletion of natural resources. Loss of biodiversity, habitat

²³ Source: World Bank Group. Pakistan: Executive Summary. Country Climate and Development Report. Nov 2022

degradation, and changes in species distribution have been observed. These changes affect ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource management. This has long-term implications for ecosystem health, biodiversity, and the availability of essential resources such as clean water and fertile land.

- Climate change may result in increased urbanization and internal migration, leading to the rapid expansion of cities and the strain on urban infrastructure, housing, and essential services. This creates challenges in providing adequate resources and services to growing urban populations.

Challenges

3.13 Climate Change

The challenges posed by climate change in Pakistan have significant implications. Some of the key implications include:



- Heat-related illnesses, waterborne diseases, and the spread of vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever and malaria are expected to increase, needing much greater attention and preparedness from health authorities.
- With rapidly changing water availability for domestic, agricultural, and industrial purposes, securing scarce resources and making people aware of judicious use is challenging.
- With expected changes in crop yields, livestock productivity, and overall agricultural output, preparing beneficiaries for a decline is a serious challenge.
- Preparing for the unexpected impacts on people's livelihood in terms of economic losses, infrastructure damage, disruption of trade and transportation, and affecting businesses and industries are challenges that need societal-level mobilization and participation.
- Pakistan acknowledges the importance of addressing the challenges posed by climate-induced migration and displacement, including protecting those affected and their access to essential services. This can lead to internal migration and increased pressure on urban areas, with implications for housing, infrastructure, and social services.
- Climate change can disrupt ecosystems and lead to biodiversity loss, including plant, insects and animal species. This can have cascading effects on ecosystem services, such as pollination, water purification, and carbon sequestration, which are essential for human well-being.

3.14 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESSES OF PAKISTAN'S APMD PRIORITY AREAS

Several factors are highlighted in this regard:

- Government Commitment:** The commitment of the government of Pakistan to improve the health sector and other areas of development has played a significant role. Policy formulation and reforms, strategic plans, and increased domestic budget allocations for health and population welfare have demonstrated the government's dedication to addressing the challenges and achieving desired outcomes. The proactive role of the Chief Justice of Pakistan is to address high population growth, approval of Plan of Action by the Council of Common Interests (Govt of Pakistan) to implement Recommendations of the Task Force, formulation of FP2030 Commitments and establishment of federal and provincial level Task Forces to address population matters. Approval of Task Sharing Strategies by provinces reflects an eagerness to strengthen family planning services in remote areas.
- Improved Access to Healthcare:** Efforts have been made to increase access to healthcare services, especially in underserved areas, through the establishment of new healthcare facilities, filling of vacancies of community-based workers, training of healthcare workers, and outreach programs to reach remote and marginalized communities using mobile services.
- Targeted Programs and Interventions:** Specific programs and interventions have addressed key health and development challenges. For example, immunization campaigns, maternal and child health programs, family planning pilots and scale-up initiatives have contributed to improvements in health and SRH outcomes. Formulating a Universal Health Coverage (UHC) plan and carrying it forward reflects a commitment to target communities for needed services. Training and equipping facilities for post-pregnancy family planning (PPFP) is one example.
- Partnerships and Collaboration:** Collaboration between the government, civil society organizations, international development partners, and other stakeholders has been instrumental in implementing programs and initiatives. These partnerships have brought together expertise, resources, and innovative approaches to pilot-test various issues. Private sector organizations have been given needed support to complement public sector initiatives in Health and FP sectors. In maternal health, private sector facilities provide various services, from safe delivery to family planning services on profile margins. The major proportion of clientele is served by these private facilities, as recorded by health surveys.
- Community Engagement:** Engaging communities and involving them in the planning and implementation of programs has been crucial. Community participation fosters ownership, increases program effectiveness, and ensures the sustainability of initiatives. District level Committees engage various local stakeholders in ensuring quality and access to services.
- International Support:** Assistance from international organizations and development partners has provided technical expertise, funding, and capacity-building support to strengthen Pakistan's health and other sectors. UNFPA, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other donor organizations supported several initiatives in maternal health, family planning, and gender equity. The provision of implants on a pilot basis and then its scale-up supported by UNFPA across Pakistan has provided choices to women seeking long-term methods but also built the capacity of public sector organizations to include these commodities in procurement plans.
- Research and Evidence-Based Decision-Making:** The availability of technical assistance for innovative research studies, data and evidence, including Performance Monitoring for Action (PMA) supported by UNFPA, has guided organizations' decision-making in the health sector. This has helped identify priority areas, design effective interventions, and monitor progress. Provincial governments pursued the collection of real-time data at facilities and communities. Such initiatives had tremendous value in addition to quality assurance and staff accountability in the field.

Pakistan introduced several governance improvements to pave the path for success in ICPD and APMD priority areas. The aim is to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of programs and initiatives in various ICPD areas. These include:

- Policy Reforms:** Creating an enabling environment is critical to achieving ICPD goals and priority areas. The government has implemented policy reforms (in most APMD priority areas) to guide and steer development plans addressing specific challenges and priorities. These policies, reforms and programmes aimed to create an enabling environment, formulate strategies to address emerging issues and build partnerships to ensure timely progress, set clear targets and objectives, elaborate outcome indicators and monitoring mechanisms, and guide the implementation of programs and initiatives. A significant success area has been the enactment of Legislation in several areas, including reproductive health, education, poverty eradication and employment generation, violence against women, etc. The Survey tool lists the details of these Legislations by federal and provincial governments.
- Institutional Strengthening:** Efforts have been made to strengthen institutions responsible for implementing and monitoring programs in the ICPD areas. This includes capacity building, enhancing coordination mechanisms, and establishing clear roles and responsibilities for different institutions. District-level coordination and monitoring mechanisms in Health, which also encompassed civil society organizations, reflected inclusiveness and built an environment of cooperation.
- Decentralization and Local Governance:** Pakistan has implemented decentralization programmes to empower local governments and communities. Local recruitment and merit helped select good staff that built trust with communities and partners. This allows for better alignment of programs with local needs and enables communities to participate in decision-making processes. District Health Authorities and their close working relationships with District Councils helped build accountability and efficiency.
- Accountability and Transparency:** The use of real-time data at the facility and service delivery level enhances the accountability of service providers and transparency in the implementation of programs. Such measures helped in building trust with the users and openness in client feedback. This includes monitoring mechanisms, performance evaluations, and public disclosure of information to ensure effective and efficient use of resources. Correct use of funds for social protection programmes is possible only through an effective accountability mechanism to efficiently track the use of funds targeted for marginalized segments.
- Stakeholder Participation:** Engaging stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, academia, and private sector entities, is an essential part of enabling environment and good governance. Their participation builds a multi-sectoral approach and brings diverse perspectives and expertise to address the challenges in the ICPD areas. The private sector in Pakistan has brought additional resources and investment, especially in Health and Education sector, helping fulfil ICPD goals and objectives.
- Engagement of Civil Society:** The role of civil society organizations and development partners is well-accepted for advocating the rights and well-being of individuals. The government recognized the importance of engaging civil society organizations in programme implementation and monitoring. In this regard, the People's Primary Healthcare Initiative model effectively reached communities in Sindh and Balochistan in Health and revealed positive outcomes in poverty alleviation, maternal health, and FP initiatives.
- Data Collection and Monitoring:** Strengthening information and facility records using clear process, output and inputs indicators have improved data collection systems in health, education and other social sector as part of monitoring mechanisms to track progress and identify areas that require attention. This includes using data for evidence-based remedial decision-making, performance measuring of targets, and measuring the immediate impact of interventions. PMA, supported by UNFPA, is an excellent example in this regard. Strengthening of DHIS and Education MIS are important initiatives across Pakistan.

By strengthening governance structures and processes, Pakistan seeks to ensure the sustainable achievement of the ICPD Program of Action goals. Pakistan has faced challenges along the way in the implementation of these improvements. Some of the challenges faced in implementing governance improvements include:

- **Translating Legislations into Results:** The real success of ICPD and APMD lies in the formal translation of Legislation into monitorable plans and activities. Pakistan has faced challenges in evolving effective mechanisms to transform laws into operational plans and tools for authorities to track implementation and report progress.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Limited institutional capacity at the national and provincial levels has posed challenges in effectively implementing and monitoring programs. This includes challenges in terms of technical expertise, human resources, and financial resources made available.
- **Coordination and Collaboration:** Ensuring effective coordination and collaboration among government departments and government and non-governmental stakeholders can be complex. Coordinating efforts across sectors and levels of government requires strong leadership and effective communication mechanisms.
- **Resource Allocation:** Adequate allocation of resources, including financial, human, and technological resources, is crucial for successfully implementing governance improvements. However, resource constraints and competing priorities can limit the availability and allocation of resources in the desired manner. Financial resources were diverted to the health sector during 2020 and 2021 to meet emergency COVID fallout, adding to family planning already constrained resources. .

Through the 18th Amendment to the Constitution in 2010, the devolution of administrative functions in Pakistan aimed to decentralize power and authority from the federal government to the provinces. The primary purpose of devolution was to enhance governance, improve service delivery, empower local governments, and address regional disparities. It aimed to bring decision-making closer to the people and promote effective and efficient governance at the provincial and local levels through increased citizen participation and improved service delivery by tailoring policies and programs to regional needs. The devolution of functions empowered provincial governments to strengthen and execute family planning functions through the Population Welfare and Health Departments through planning, allocation of resources, and strengthening institutions for capacity building, awareness and monitoring activities. Provinces evolved new policies and strategies with some delay to strengthen ongoing programs. Pakistan faced several challenges associated with the devolution of functions and including:

- The devolution of functions required building the capacity of provincial and local governments to assume and manage the transferred responsibilities effectively. This involved enhancing administrative, financial, and technical capacities at the sub-national level, which required time, resources, and concerted efforts.
- The devolution of functions has necessitated harmonising policies and programs across different levels of government. Ensuring alignment and coordination among federal, provincial, and local governments is required.
- Ensuring accountability and oversight mechanisms at the provincial and local levels became crucial with the devolution of functions. Building robust accountability systems, establishing adequate checks and balances, and ensuring transparency in decision-making and resource management have been ongoing challenges.
- The devolution process required ensuring smooth and efficient service delivery, with necessary service standards across provinces enforced, which needed attention and continuous monitoring.
- The devolution process highlighted disparities among provinces regarding governance capacity, financial resources, and service delivery to address growing needs.
- The use of logistics indicators (CYP) for monitoring progress and performance by provincial Departments relegated essential functions (communications, capacity building, quality assurance and field

monitoring, etc.) as secondary, allocating low importance and funding. Low priority to these critical functions openly negates the policy statements and commitment made under ICPD.

- **Political Will and Stability:** Political will and stability are essential for sustaining governance improvements over the long term. Changes in political leadership, policy priorities, or shifts in political dynamics affected the continuity and effectiveness of governance reforms.
- **Socio-Cultural Context:** Pakistan's socio-cultural context influences the implementation of governance improvements. Traditional norms, cultural practices, and social attitudes impact the acceptance and smooth adoption of specific policies and interventions. Compromises are noted in local-level recruitment influenced by local leaders.
- **Data Availability and Quality:** Access to reliable and timely data is critical for effectively monitoring and evaluating programs. Data gaps, limited data availability, and challenges in data quality hamper the accurate assessment of progress and the identification of areas requiring attention. The absence of quality research in most APMD priority areas is linked to poor data availability and lack of



Besides the progress Pakistan has made in health and family planning sectors and efforts to address governance issues and implement improvements to advance the goals of the ICPD Program of Action and APMD priority areas, challenges persist as barriers to achieving the desired outcomes.



04 Conclusions

Based on the review of achievements and challenges in each of the 11 priority areas under the APMD 2013, following key conclusions can be drawn.

- Overall, progress has been made in implementing the APMD agenda in Pakistan, but the change happening is too slow, sporadically, and for too few people. There are still significant challenges to overcome. Continued commitment, resource allocation, policy reforms, and collaboration among stakeholders are crucial for achieving the goals of the APMD and advancing population and sustainable development in the country.
- Progress in female education is noted in Pakistan, but girls remain at higher risk of missing out on school. This evidence is noted despite evidence that keeping girls in school is one of the essential strategies to advance the achievement of the Nairobi commitments and the ICPD agenda.
- Strengthening health systems in Pakistan is well recorded to achieve essential health outcomes, including reduced maternal and child morbidity and mortality and promotion of family planning. The lack of consistent, effective decisions across provinces to make health systems vigorous to meet the rising family planning needs to make SRH universally accessible and provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights as essential elements in line with the ICPD commitments remained an area needing attention.
- Shortages of contraceptive commodities faced during and post-COVID period made surgical sterilization the only option for many women. Though contraceptives are free of charge in public sector facilities, costs in the private sector increased due to GST imposed on condoms in 2021 may have led to some pregnancies as unplanned.
- Health services disruption during COVID Pakistan experienced interruptions in essential health services, especially in sexual and reproductive health services, which may have produced immediate consequences: more maternal deaths, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, gender-based violence and violations of people's rights.
- Political will is recognized as a powerful accelerator of progress already unfolding, driven by the people's demands to end inequalities and build on decades of knowledge and proven solutions to address the gaps.
- Governments and political leaders acknowledge that investing in health is vital for achieving goals. The need exists to make specific efforts to reach groups facing discrimination and inequality.
- Implementation Challenges: Despite the progress, implementing the APMD agenda remains an uphill task with several challenges. Key challenges include inadequate funding, weak governance structures, limited awareness and capacity, regional disparities, and cultural barriers.
- The interconnectedness of Issues: Reviewing all priority areas highlights the interconnected nature. Progress in one area often has ripple effects on other areas. For example, improvements in education can lead to better health outcomes and a reduction in population growth, while gender equality is linked to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Evidence exists in Pakistan but needs to be replicated and scaled up for greater benefits.
- Need for Multi-Sectoral Approach: The complexity of the issues requires a multi-sectoral approach involving various stakeholders such as government agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international partners. Collaboration and coordination among these stakeholders are crucial for adequate and effective implementation.
- Policy Reforms: The review underscores the importance of policy reforms and legal frameworks to address the challenges and promote achieving APMD goals. These reforms should align with international commitments and prioritize the rights and well-being of individuals, especially marginalized groups.
- Data and Monitoring: There is a need for robust data collection, monitoring, and evaluation systems to track progress, identify gaps, and inform evidence-based decision-making. Strengthening data and statistics infrastructure is essential for targeted interventions and resource allocation.
- Focus on Vulnerable Groups: Special attention should be given to vulnerable groups such as women, youth, adolescents, migrants, and the elderly. Inclusive and targeted interventions are necessary to address their needs and ensure their participation in development processes.
- Translating Legislations into Action Plans: Pakistan has progressed with legislative work in several arenas. Its implementation faced bottlenecks and barriers to realising the ultimate goals. A clear roadmap and measures from legislation to practical measures are urgently needed to ensure early smooth implementation and attain desired outcomes.

Budget and finance have emerged as major areas that can affect sector outcomes. Pakistan has made efforts to increase investments in the health sector over the years. Still, Pakistan's overall health expenditure as a percentage of GDP has remained relatively low compared to international standards. Furthermore, many other priority areas are underfunded or underinvested in Pakistan. The positive element of budgeting and finance is that the Government mainly undertakes domestic finance in Pakistan, which has increased over the last decades, and dependence on foreign assistance has decreased. Some specific inter-linkages of priority areas are highlighted for importance:

1. Human Development:

Investing in quality education and skill development programs significantly impacts poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and youth employment.



2. Health and Family Planning:

Allocating resources to improve healthcare infrastructure, strengthen health systems, and enhance access to quality healthcare services will lead to better health outcomes, particularly for women, children, and marginalized communities, and directly affect population growth.



3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

Increased focus and funds to initiatives promoting gender equality, such as awareness campaigns, vocational training programs, and support services for women entrepreneurs, can create economic opportunities and empower women.



4. Poverty Eradication and Social Protection:

Targeted investments in poverty eradication programs, social safety nets, and income-generating projects directly contribute to alleviating poverty and improving living conditions, particularly in rural areas and among vulnerable populations. The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Pakistan aims to alleviate poverty by providing cash transfers to low-income households. The Programme has positively contributed to reducing poverty and improving social protection; it does not fully address all dimensions of poverty or lead to complete poverty eradication. It is essential to recognize that poverty is a complex issue with multiple dimensions, and addressing it requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach beyond cash transfers alone.



5. Sustainable Development and Environment:

Allocating funds for renewable energy projects, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and environmental conservation can contribute to sustainable development and address the emerging challenges of climate change.



6. Urban Development and Infrastructure:

Investments in urban planning, housing, and infrastructure development are essential to address the challenges of rapid urbanization, improve living conditions in slums, and promote sustainable urban growth.



7. Youth and Adolescent Development:

Allocating resources for youth-focused programs, including education, skill training, entrepreneurship, and youth empowerment initiatives, can harness the potential of the growing youth population and contribute to sustainable development.



It is important to prioritize investments based on the specific needs of Pakistan, taking into account the interconnections between these priority areas.

Pakistan needs additional allocations and increased support for the health and SRH sector. Areas need adequate funding to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, improve access to essential services, enhance the quality of care, and address the specific health needs of different population segments, including women and adolescents. Investing in SRHR services, including family planning, maternal health, and reproductive health programs, is particularly important to address women's unmet need for contraception and health outcomes and ensure their reproductive rights. Additional resources can support the expansion of comprehensive SRH services, access to contraceptives, awareness campaigns, and the training of healthcare providers and capacity building of managers. Furthermore, investments in health research, surveillance systems, and data collection are essential to inform evidence-based policies and interventions, monitor health indicators, and track progress towards health-related goals.

The education sector in Pakistan, mainly primary and secondary education, is another area that requires significant investments and support. While the government has taken steps to increase access to education and improve educational quality, budget

allocations are still challenging. Pakistan has increased its spending on education over the years. However, the education budget as a percentage of GDP remains relatively low compared to international benchmarks. This is reflected in inadequate school resources, insufficient infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, and limited access to quality education, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas.

Budget utilization can be increased effectively by investing in establishing and renovating school infrastructure, providing necessary teaching and learning materials, recruiting and training qualified teachers, and implementing strategies to enhance the quality of education. Furthermore, there is a need to focus on addressing educational disparities, especially gender disparities and urban and rural areas disparities. This involves targeting marginalized and underprivileged communities, providing scholarships and financial assistance to promote enrollment and retention, and implementing inclusive education policies to ensure access for all children, including those with disabilities. Pakistan needs focused investment in educational technology, curriculum development, and vocational and technical education to strengthen the education sector and prepare students for the changing job market.

1951
50 Years
of Independence



05

Recommendations

For Pakistan to meet the priority areas outlined in the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration (APMD), the following concrete recommendations are highlighted in each area:

5.1 POVERTY ERADICATION AND EMPLOYMENT

- Foster an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and promote small and medium-sized enterprises to generate employment opportunities.
- Political leadership must evolve a consensus to focus on poverty eradication and employment as a national priority, committing to sustained efforts and providing necessary resources for their implementation. This needs to develop a long-term national strategy and policy framework that transcends political transitions.
- Pakistan should allocate necessary financial resources to poverty eradication and employment programs. This can be achieved by exploring innovative funding mechanisms, engaging in public-private partnerships, and seeking international support. Adequate funding will enable the implementation of comprehensive and sustainable initiatives to alleviate poverty and create employment opportunities.
- Implement targeted poverty alleviation programs, such as cash transfer schemes jointly with skill development initiatives, to support employment generation to the most vulnerable populations.
- Capacity building to design, implement, and monitor effective programs and policies at the national and provincial levels is a critical step. This encompasses training programs, skill-building initiatives, and technical assistance to individuals and organizations involved in poverty eradication and employment efforts.
- Strengthening disaster preparedness and response mechanisms is essential to mitigate the impact of such events and ensure the continuity of poverty eradication and employment efforts.
- Strengthen social protection systems to provide a safety net for impoverished people and ensure access to essential services. Linkage with NRSP/RSPN and small enterprises is critical for skill development and placement for employment.
- Consistent political commitment and support are essential for the continuity and sustainability of poverty eradication and employment generation efforts.
- Coordination and collaboration among different government ministries and departments and other stakeholders, including development partners, are essential for integrated approaches to addressing poverty and employment challenges.
- Enhancing data sharing and integration mechanisms will enable more effective targeting and implementation of poverty eradication and employment programs.
- Given Pakistan's large population, scaling up international support will be crucial to address the multifaceted challenges of poverty and unemployment.

5.2 HEALTH

- Pakistan needs to enhance its GDP allocations to healthcare per World Health Organization's recommendations and international standards. Increase investment in healthcare infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas, to improve access to quality healthcare services.
- Enhance primary healthcare services, including maternal and child healthcare, immunization programs, and disease prevention and control.
- Integrate family planning services with maternal and child health services to enhance access.
- Addressing inequities and disparities in maternal health outcomes is crucial for Pakistan. Efforts should focus on ensuring equitable access to quality services across geographic locations, socioeconomic groups, and educational levels. Pakistan needs targeted interventions, investments in underserved areas, and initiatives to reduce financial barriers to accessing care.

- Promote health education and awareness campaigns to address health-related issues and encourage healthy behaviours.
- Efforts are needed to address the shortage of healthcare professionals. This can be achieved by increasing the enrolment capacity of medical and nursing schools, providing incentives for healthcare professionals to work in underserved areas, and implementing targeted recruitment strategies.
- Improving vital registration of births and deaths is critical, as implementing robust health information management systems complemented by regular household and beneficiary surveys to gather disaggregated data on key health indicators. Improving digital health systems has improved data collection and enabled evidence-based decision-making and good practices.
- Engaging communities and local organizations in decision-making processes and health program implementation is essential for a bottom-up approach and achieving community ownership. Pakistan needs to strengthen the community-based health programs that have led to improved health outcomes through active community participation.
- Mandatory premarital counselling for marriage registration can play a key role in improving maternal and child health indicators in Pakistan.
- Pakistan needs to evolve a proper Health Communication Strategy for public awareness campaigns, health education programs, and community involvement to improve health literacy, promote preventive healthcare practices, and ensure that healthcare services are responsive to community needs.

5.3 SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

To mitigate the challenges in sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in Pakistan, the following recommendations need to be considered:

- Pakistan needs to invest in family planning to reduce the fertility rate to replacement levels by 2035. Improve access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare services, integrating family planning and maternal healthcare services.
- Pakistan's LHW Program is recognized to have improved access to healthcare services and played a crucial role in promoting family planning services and increasing contraceptive use, especially in remote and marginalized communities. The Program needs adequate funding and resources to perform and show progress and address staff shortages that have been a barrier to its progress.
- Pakistan must increase the overall budget allocation for family planning and reproductive health programs. This includes allocating sufficient funds for service provision, commodity procurement, training of healthcare providers, awareness campaigns, research, monitoring and evaluation, and policy implementation.
- Strengthen the capacity of healthcare providers to deliver high-quality reproductive health services and ensure the availability of essential contraceptives, commodities and supplies. The Department of Health needs to adopt Task-Shifting/Sharing strategy and action to promote competency-based training, especially in rural and remote health facilities to dispense contraceptives.
- Strengthen efforts to promote long-acting methods in all service outlets with necessary competency-based training for health staff in remote facilities.
- Promote gender-sensitive approaches to reproductive health, ensuring the rights of individuals to make informed choices about their reproductive health and access a range of contraceptive methods.
- Collaboration among departments is crucial for addressing sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Efforts are needed to foster coordination among ministries, establishing mechanisms for joint planning, implementation, and monitoring of programs.
- Lack of awareness among concerned people is a severe challenge. Extensive awareness campaigns are needed to educate the public, government officials, and key stakeholders about the legislation, their purpose, and the rights they protect.

5.4 EDUCATION

The National Education Policy Framework 2018 committed to 'Education for All' and prioritized girls' education, leading to increased enrolment and retention rates. Several recommendations emerge to address the challenges enumerated earlier.

- Pakistan needs to allocate more funds and financial resources to the education sector for infrastructure development, teacher recruitment and training, and program implementation. Adequate funding is essential to bridge the resource gap and improve the quality of education.
- Priority needs to be given to improving the quality and quantity of teachers, particularly in rural areas. Comprehensive teacher training programs, incentives for teachers to work in remote areas, and recruitment drives to address the shortage of qualified teachers are needed.
- Infrastructure development and existing gaps, especially in rural and remote areas, must be addressed, including constructing and renovating school buildings, providing necessary facilities such as clean water and sanitation, and ensuring access to electricity using solar energy and technology for effective teaching and learning.
- The promotion of gender equality and girls' education is highly recommended. Targeted initiatives/interventions are needed to improve access and retention of girls in schools. This can include awareness campaigns, scholarships, and incentives for families to prioritize girls' education. Ensure the availability of safe and supportive learning environments that encourage the full participation of girls.
- Efficient planning and monitoring need good quality data based on education MIS. Data collection mechanisms to gather comprehensive and disaggregated data on education indicators will provide a solid foundation for evidence-based decision-making and effective progress monitoring.
- Pakistan needs effective public awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of education and promote community involvement in educational initiatives. Important measures include engaging parents, local communities, and civil society organizations in decision-making processes to ensure a bottom-up approach and address the specific needs of marginalized populations. Capacity building of teachers in areas such as providing life skill-based education, contraceptive counselling, and addressing gender-based violence should be adopted.

5.5 GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Analysis of challenges related to gender equality matters has identified several recommendations.

- Establish or strengthen institutions overseeing and implementing women empowerment laws and policies.
- Implement policies and programs to address gender-based discrimination, violence against women, and barriers to women's empowerment in all sectors.
- Improve women's access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and decision-making positions.
- Enhance legal frameworks and ensure effective implementation to protect women's rights and promote gender equality.
- Provide training and strengthen capacity-building programs focusing on government officials, law enforcement agencies, and judicial personnel to enhance their understanding of women's rights, promoting gender-sensitive approaches, and their roles in implementing the legislation effectively. Establishing special units or cells dedicated to addressing violence and discrimination against women is highly recommended.

- Improve women's access to justice by establishing special courts or fast-track mechanisms to handle cases related to women's rights violations and harassment issues.
- Focus on creating women's economic empowerment opportunities by promoting entrepreneurship, skills development, and financial inclusion. Provide access to microfinance and training programs that enhance women's entrepreneurial skills.
- Need to strengthen data collection systems to focus on sex-disaggregated data and statistics on implementing women empowerment laws.
- Important to engage men and boys to promote gender equality and challenge harmful gender norms actively. Promote gender-responsive parenting and education that emphasize respect, equality, and non-violence.
- Launch extensive awareness campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes, promote positive attitudes towards women's rights, and foster an inclusive and gender-sensitive society. Engage media, religious leaders, and community influencers to support and advocate for gender equality.

| With respect to gender-based violence, it is recommended to:

- Strengthen legal frameworks and mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment and child marriage. Ensure effective implementation and enforcement of these laws.
- Increase public awareness and education campaigns to challenge societal norms and attitudes perpetuating gender-based violence.
- Enhance access to comprehensive support services for victims of GBV, including medical care, counselling, legal aid, and safe shelters.
- Enhance capacity-building programs for law enforcement agencies to respond to GBV cases effectively.
- Establish a national helpline and online reporting mechanisms to facilitate reporting and access to services for GBV survivors.
- Enhance support services for victims of gender-based violence, including access to shelters, counselling, and legal assistance.

5.6 ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Looking at Pakistan's limited health resources, it is viable to adopt the School Health promotion model as an effective means to empower school children and adolescents to achieve health for all through intersectoral and sincere efforts of health providers, parents and all others involved in the health delivery process.
- Enhance access to quality education and vocational training programs to equip youth with the skills needed for employment and entrepreneurship.
- Promote youth empowerment and participation in decision-making processes at all levels, including establishing youth-led platforms and forums.
- Efforts are to empower young women and girls, eliminate discriminatory practices, and ensure access to education, health services, and economic opportunities.
- Provide Life Skill Based Education (LSBE), youth-friendly healthcare services, increasing access to comprehensive sex education, enhancing economic opportunities for young people, and creating an enabling environment that supports their holistic development and well-being to address their needs. It calls for a multi-sectoral approach involving government, civil society organizations, and development partners to effectively coordinate and implement the ICPD agenda and create an enabling environment for youth development.

5.7 URBANIZATION AND INTERNAL MIGRATION

The key recommendation for Pakistan's urban development and internal migration that emerge from the discussion on challenges are:

- Develop comprehensive urban planning strategies to address the challenges of rapid urbanization, including providing affordable housing, basic services, slum development, infrastructure deficiencies, and inadequate service delivery.
- The Urban Immovable Property Taxes, an essential source of local revenue, is at 0.13 per cent of GDP in Pakistan, which is quite low compared to other low- and middle-income countries²⁴. City governments rely on intergovernmental fiscal transfers and have limited space for generating own-source revenues. There is an urgent need to strengthen local governments' institutional and revenue generation capacity to improve service provision and attract private investment. Cities need to prioritize actions that create sustainable revenue streams for investment in resilient infrastructure and improved delivery of basic municipal services.
- Promote sustainable urban development practices, including affordable housing, efficient public transportation systems, access to basic amenities, and connectivity to improve mobility within and between cities.
- Most Pakistani cities are experiencing lower-density expansion on their fringes, and the average city has grown spatially at 6.8 per cent annually. Modernising urban land management systems to incentivize urban densification and Enforcing land regulation and land use planning and control measures are urgently needed.
- Strengthen urban areas' governance and institutional management capacities at the local level through effective urban policies, regulations, and institutions.
- Implement inclusive urban development programs that address the needs of marginalized communities, including slum upgrading initiatives and social housing programs.
- Strengthen legislation to stop the encroachment of agricultural and farm lands from private urban housing schemes.
- Building the institutional capacity of local government bodies and organizations engaged with urban development and migration management is highly recommended. This includes training, workshops, and professional development opportunities to enhance the knowledge and skills of officials and professionals working in these fields.
- Given the impact of emergencies and crises on urban areas and internal migration, Pakistan should integrate resilience-building measures into urban planning and development processes. This includes incorporating climate change adaptation strategies, disaster risk reduction plans, and social safety nets to enhance the resilience of urban communities. Furthermore, ensuring that emergency response mechanisms are well-coordinated and responsive to the specific needs of urban migrants is essential.
- Strengthen disaster resilience in urban areas by integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into urban planning and infrastructure development.

²⁴ Source: World Bank Group. Pakistan: Executive Summary. CCDR. Nov 2022

5.8 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

To address the challenges related to international migration, the following key recommendations Pakistan must consider:

- Address the challenges around international migration through a multi-faceted approach, including strengthening migration governance, improving legislation and policies, enhancing protection mechanisms, investing in skill development and employment opportunities, and fostering international cooperation.
- Develop comprehensive policies and legal frameworks to govern international migration, ensuring the protection of migrants' rights and access to basic services. This framework should be based on international human rights standards and best practices.
- Expand legal channels for migration to provide viable and safe options for individuals seeking to migrate. Strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation to address the challenges and opportunities associated with international migration, including labour migration and diaspora engagement.
- Provide support and services to returning migrants, including reintegration programs, skills training, and access to employment opportunities.
- Promote social integration and inclusion of migrants in the host communities through awareness campaigns, cultural exchange programs, and access to social services. This would include language and cultural orientation programs, vocational training and skills development, and support for accessing education, healthcare, and housing.
- Strengthen border management systems and mechanisms to manage migration flows and prevent human trafficking and smuggling effectively. Pakistan needs to enhance coordination among relevant government agencies, improve surveillance and intelligence sharing, and prosecute individuals involved in these illegal activities.

5.9 POPULATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Prioritize education and literacy initiatives, especially focusing on women and marginalized communities, to empower individuals, promote informed decision-making, and break the cycle of poverty. Increasing access to education, improving the quality of education, and promoting adult literacy programs will contribute to sustainable development.
- Integrate population dynamics into national development planning, including demographic data analysis and projections.
- Improve access to quality healthcare services, particularly in rural and marginalized areas, by investing in healthcare infrastructure, training healthcare professionals, and ensuring the availability of essential medicines and equipment. This will help address maternal and child health challenges and improve overall population health outcomes.
- Expand the availability and accessibility of reproductive health services. Strengthen the execution of family planning programs and ensure access to reproductive healthcare services. Strengthening healthcare infrastructure, training healthcare providers, and raising awareness about reproductive health rights are important.
- Promote sustainable development practices, including environmental conservation, natural resource management, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

- Prioritize investments in renewable energy projects, sustainable agriculture practices, water conservation, and climate change adaptation strategies, and engage international partners to access additional funding and technical expertise.
 - Develop supportive policies, laws, and regulations that incentivize sustainable development practices, renewable energy adoption, and investment in population management.
 - Financial appraisals may be conducted to evaluate the 'value for money' of different interventions in social protection, education, skills development, and infrastructure development is essential for overcoming these challenges.
 - Long-term planning, practical implementation, and monitoring of development initiatives are essential to reduce regional disparities and promote balanced and sustainable development across Pakistan.
 - To achieve its development goals, Pakistan must improve human capital and strengthen governance.
- Improving human capital is necessary for growth and building resilience, for which two priorities stand out: accelerating the decline in total fertility toward replacement fertility levels; and addressing child stunting by expanding access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities.
- Second, improving economic governance is crucial for aligning economic incentives with climate and development imperatives and facilitating finance mobilisation, including substantive international support.
 - Promotion of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change.
 - Sustainable management of water resources, including improved irrigation practices and water conservation measures.
 - Enhancing adaptive capacity and resilience of communities, particularly vulnerable groups, to climate change impacts.

5.10 DATA AND STATISTICS

Pakistan has made valuable progress in this area, but a review of the challenges above reflects specific recommendations to be adopted by Pakistan and encompasses:

- Strengthen national statistical systems and capacities to collect, analyze, and disseminate reliable, accurate and timely data on population dynamics, including demographic, health, and socio-economic indicators.
- Strengthen capacity-building initiatives to enhance the skills and expertise of individuals involved in data collection, analysis, and utilization. Support is required in terms of data digitization efforts to improve the availability and strengthen data governance mechanisms.
- Increase financial resources for data gathering processing, analysis, infrastructure and human development.
- Promote the use of data for evidence-based policymaking and monitoring of development goals, including implementing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- Foster collaboration and partnerships among government agencies, civil society organizations, and academia to enhance data collection and analysis.
- Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are critical for tracking progress as part of data and statistics initiatives. Pakistan needs to design clear indicators and benchmarks to measure the effectiveness and impact of data programs. Regularly evaluate data quality, accessibility, and utilization to identify areas for improvement and ensure accountability.
- For effective planning, establish mechanisms for inter-ministerial collaboration and coordination on data and statistics. Foster partnerships among government departments to ensure data sharing, harmonization, and integration. Effectively engage private sector entities to share needed information on input, process and output indicators, especially in health and SRH.

5.11 AGEING

Several measures have been initiated across Pakistan, but several existing challenges call for specific recommendations.

- Develop policies and programs that address the needs and rights of the ageing population, including healthcare, social protection, active ageing initiatives, financial security, employment opportunities, and social inclusion for older persons. Emphasis should be placed on the practical implementation of senior citizens' legislation at the provincial level, overcoming bottlenecks and ensuring tangible results for the well-being of ageing individuals.
- Strengthen healthcare and support systems for the elderly, including long-term care services and geriatric facilities. Prioritize establishing specialized geriatric healthcare services, training healthcare professionals in geriatric care, and improving access to age-appropriate medical facilities and long-term care options.
- Invest in the training and capacity development of healthcare professionals, social workers, and caregivers to specialize in geriatric care. This includes providing specialized training on age-related health issues, dementia care, and elder abuse prevention.
- Foster intergenerational solidarity and promote the inclusion and participation of older persons in society. Encourage intergenerational interaction and mutual support between older and younger generations, fostering a sense of social inclusion and respect for older individuals.
- Take measures to combat age discrimination and promote social inclusion for older individuals. This includes creating employment opportunities, ensuring access to education and training programs, and eliminating barriers that prevent older persons from accessing public services and participating fully in society.
- Attention is needed to enhance data collection efforts to gather comprehensive and up-to-date information on the ageing population in Pakistan. This data should be disaggregated to understand older individuals' diverse needs and circumstances.
- As the proportion of the elderly population continues to grow, it becomes essential for Pakistan to address the specific needs and challenges this age group faces, such as healthcare, social support systems, pension schemes, and ensuring their overall well-being. Adequate policies and programs focused on elderly care and promoting active and healthy ageing will be crucial for addressing the emerging needs of the ageing population in Pakistan.
- Efforts are needed to recruit and train healthcare professionals, social workers, and volunteers specializing in geriatric care.
- With an increasing number of elderly individuals, there may be a higher demand for pension and social security systems to provide financial support for retired individuals. This requires robust policies and programs to ensure older adults' economic well-being and social inclusion.
- To address this, the government must focus on capacity-building initiatives to equip relevant stakeholders, including government officials, healthcare providers, and social workers, with the needed knowledge and skills to cater to the needs of the elderly. Training programs and workshops have been conducted to enhance the capacity of professionals involved in ageing-related services.

5.12 FOOD SECURITY

- Investment in agricultural research and development, use of modern technology for water management, climate-smart agriculture practices, market infrastructure development, nutrition education, social protection programs, protection of agricultural lands, and policies promoting sustainable and inclusive agricultural practices are the need of time.
- Collaboration between the government, civil society, private sector, and international partners is crucial for overcoming these challenges and ensuring long-term food security in Pakistan.
- Improve agricultural practices and promote sustainable farming techniques to enhance productivity, resilience, and sustainability of the agricultural sector.
- Enhance access to credit, inputs, and technology for small-scale farmers, especially women and marginalized communities.
- Strengthen storage and distribution infrastructure to minimize post-harvest losses and ensure efficient supply chains.
- Invest in irrigation systems, water management, and drought-resistant crops to mitigate the impact of climate change on agriculture.
- Promote nutrition education and awareness campaigns to address malnutrition and improve dietary diversity.

5.13 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Pakistan has experienced tremendous progress in this domain, while new technologies and developments seek innovative measures to keep abreast and ahead in various sectors. Pakistan needs to:

- Expand access to digital technologies and infrastructure, particularly in rural and marginalized areas, to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable opportunities for all.
- Strengthen cybersecurity measures and data protection regulations to safeguard privacy and prevent online harassment and cybercrime.
- Promote digital literacy programs and skills development initiatives to enhance digital literacy among all population segments, including women and marginalized groups.
- Encourage public-private partnerships to foster innovation in social and economic development solutions, including e-commerce, digital financial services, and telemedicine.
- There is a need to develop integrated and coherent national digitalization strategies through social dialogue to address skill development on the demand and supply sides of the labour market.

Implementing these recommendations of APMD priority areas will contribute to achieving the goals outlined in the Declaration and SDGs (goals 3 and 5) for promoting sustainable development in Pakistan. It requires multi-sectoral collaboration, available resources, and continuous monitoring and evaluation to track progress and address emerging challenges. These recommendations have highlighted key action areas, but the specific strategies and approaches may vary depending on the context and evolving needs of various regions/provinces. All stakeholders (the government, civil society organizations, development partners, and the private sector) need to collaborate and prioritize implementing these recommendations to achieve the goals of the APMD and foster sustainable development in Pakistan. It also requires focus on governance issues, ensuring policy coherence, adequate financing and mobilizing resources, effective implementation of legislations, and promoting inclusive and development practices.

The recommendations narrated above can contribute to addressing the objectives of the 2013 APMD and achieving goals beyond ICPD30; it is important to note that comprehensive and sustained efforts are required to achieve the desired outcomes. Here are some additional thoughts that could build clarity:

- **Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Collaboration:** Enhance coordination and collaboration among different sectors, including health, education, gender, youth, population and development, climate change and others, to ensure a holistic approach to population and sustainable development.
- **Strengthening Health Systems:** Improve healthcare infrastructure, integrating reproductive health services in urban and rural areas (as per FP2030 Commitments). Increase investment in healthcare workforce competencies and training, service delivery, and access to essential medicines and technologies.
- **Strengthen Governance:** Essential for smooth and harmonized development is to address upfront the challenges associated with the devolution of functions to provinces.
- **Crucial for Pakistan to prioritize and increase its domestic budgetary commitments to family planning and reproductive health.** Adequate financial resources will enable the implementation of comprehensive programs, ensure access to quality services, and contribute to achieving the ICPD30 goals.
- **Enhancing Access to Quality Education:** Invest in education and skills development programs, especially for girls and young women, to empower them and enable them to make informed choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health and overall well-being.
- **Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:** Address gender inequalities by promoting women's rights, economic empowerment, and participation in decision-making. Ensure access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning.
- **Promoting Youth Engagement and Participation:** Create opportunities for meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes, policy development, and program implementation. Empower young people to become agents of change by providing them with comprehensive education, skills development, and employment opportunities.
- **Strengthening Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change Adaptation:** Prioritize measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change and build resilience, particularly in vulnerable communities. This includes investing in early warning systems, infrastructure development, and disaster risk reduction strategies.
- **Enhancing Data and Statistical Systems:** Strengthen data collection and monitoring systems to ensure accurate and reliable data on population dynamics, health indicators, and other relevant factors. This will guide towards evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation.
- **Addressing Ageing Population Challenges:** Strengthen and implement policies and programs that cater to the needs of the ageing population, including healthcare services, social protection, and active ageing initiatives.

A

ANNEX



Annex I. List of Provincial and National Workshops Participants and Contributors to the Consultation Process

No.	Name	Designation	Department/Organization
Federal Level			
1	Mr Kamran Rehman Khan	Additional Secretary	Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination
2	Ms Rezwana Siddiqui	Director General	Ministry of Privatization
3	Ms Rehma Rabab Hyder	Director	NUST Islamabad
4	Dr Saman Nazir	Senior Research Economist	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics
5	Dr Sabina Durrani	Director General	Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination
6	Ms Madiha Amjad	Statistical Officer	–
7	Mr Muhammad Saleem Ullah	Deputy Secretary (R)	Deputy Secretary (R)
8	Mr Touseef Ahmed	Monitoring & Evaluation Officer	World Food Program, Pakistan
9	Mr Hamid Ullah	National Program Coordinator	ACT International, Pakistan
10	Engr. Sumaira Zaheer	Associate Prof.	National Skills University, Islamabad
11	Mr Babar Bashir	Managing Director	Rozan Organization, Islamabad
12	Mr Atif Sheikh	Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP)	Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP), Islamabad
13	Ms Sadaf Zulfiqar	OIC	Social Policy Section, UNICEF Pakistan
14	Mr Syeda Memoona Zeb	Gender Specialist	UNDP, Pakistan
15	Dr Memoona Zaidi	Sr. Sector Specialist	–
16	Dr Aysha Sheraz	Director	National Institute of Population Studies
17	Ms Maryam Irfan	Managing Director	SoLF
18	Ms Hasina Bano	Program Associate	UNFPA Pakistan
19	Ms Shahida Fazil	Assistant Rep (R)	UNFPA Pakistan
20	Dr Ali M Mir	Senior Director	Population Council, Pakistan
21	Mr Naveed Ahmed Khan	Spokesperson	Daily The Spokesmen
22	Mr Kamran Nawaz Khan	Deputy Electronic Advisor	Radio Pakistan
23	Mr Kamran Raj	Special Correspondent	Roze News
24	Mr Czechangez Khan Jadoon	Radio Reporter/Analyst	Radio Pakistan

Punjab			
1	Samina Ashraf	Regional Director	Rahnuma – Family Planning Association of Pakistan
2	Mr Afzal Ranjha	Deputy Administrator	Zakat Department Punjab
3	Mr Ammar Nasim	Program Manager	Punjab Information Technology Board
4	Ms Anam Sghir	Officer	Social Welfare Department Punjab
5	Dr Imtiaz Ali	Officer	Punjab Healthcare Commission
6	Dr Amjad Ramzan	Medical Officer	Population Welfare Punjab
7	Mr Imran Ranjha	Deputy Secretary	Primary & Secondary Health Services Punjab
8	Ms Nayab Faiza	Research Associate	Punjab Social Protection Authority
9	Ms Rehana Afzal	General Manager (M&E)	Punjab Social Protection Authority
10	Dr Ahmad Afnan	Additional Secretary	Punjab Auqaf Department
11	Mr Shoaib Shahzad	Program Manager	United Nations Population Fund
12	Mr Khan M		United Nations Population Fund
13	Ms Javeria Ejaz	Consultant	–
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa			
1	Muhammad Amjad Ghani	Provincial Coordinator	United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
2	Dr Saeed Anwar	Professor	PF
3	Mr Ahmed A. Nauman	Program Officer	PF
4	Mr Bilal Ahmed	Project Officer	International Labour Organization
5	Mr Mukhtar Gul	Team Leader	Sarhad Rural Support Programme
6	Ms Khadija Nadeem	Development Specialist	Food and Agriculture Organization
7	Mr Kashif	Regional Manager	Social Policy and Development Centre
8	Ms Amna Durrani	Director Program	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women
9	Ms Shagufta Gul	Coordinator	United Nations Women
10	Mr Shams	Assistant Chief (H)	Planning and Development
11	Dr Muhammad Imran	Assistant Prof.	Khyber Medical College
12	Mr Shakeel Khan	Chief Population	Ministry of Population Development and Social Integration
13	Mr Noor Alam	Additional Secretary	Public Works Department
14	Ms Kazim Salman	Deputy Chief Population	MoPD&SI
15	Dr Shahid Younis	Director General	Health Department
16	Dr Khizar	Director MCH	Health Department

17	Mr Muqaddar Shah	Program Analyst	United Nations Population Fund
18	Ms Salma Khatoon	Nutrition Officer	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
19	Mr Shehriyar Khan	MCH Officer	Directorate General of Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
20	Mr Muhammad Khalid	Planning Officer	Elementary & Secondary Education Department
21	Mr Safdar Kamal	Deputy Director (EMS)	Elementary & Secondary Education Department
22	Mr Munawar Shah	Coordinator	Planning & Development Department
23	Mr Tamour Shah	PSO to Special Secretary	Planning & Development Department
24	Mr Pir Muhammad	Deputy Secretary	Home Department
25	Ms Neelofar	Head of Department	Education Sector
26	Dr M. Sohail Younis	Assistant Prof.	Institute of Management Sciences, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
27	Dr Nasir Azam	District Program Officer	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
28	Mr Muzafar Khan	Associate	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
29	Mr Syed Musaver Shah	Project Director	Provincial Disaster Management Authority Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
30	Mr Mudasir Khan	Section Officer	Social Welfare
31	Mr Ahsan Ullah	Planning Officer	Livestock Department
32	Dr Zainoor Fida	Focal Person	United Nations International Organization for Migration (Health)
33	Dr Mansoor	Migration Health Physician	United Nations International Organization for Migration (Health)
34	Dr Isma Jabeen	Consultant	World Health Organization
35	Dr Mazhir Khan	NPO MNCAH/N	World Health Organization
36	Dr Babar Alam	Operations Officer	World Health Organization
37	Dr Shahid Khan	Program Specialist	United Nations Population Fund
38	Mr M. Shoaib	AEA	Land Department
39	Mr Syed Yasir Hayat	Program Policy Officer	United Nations World Food Programme
40	Ms Mahjabeen Qazi	Program Analyst	United Nations Population Fund
41	Mr G. Fareed Khan	Program Analyst	United Nations Population Fund
42	Dr Shardana Sarir	Deputy Director MCH	Directorate General of Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Sindh			
1	Mr Nasrullah Mako	Deputy Secretary	Auqaaf & Religious Affairs, Zakat & Ushr
2	Dr Samia han	Deputy Director	Sindh Healthcare Commission
3	Mr Altaf Shaikh	Deputy Director	Sindh Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority
4	Dr RubinaMahmood	Director	Sindh Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority

5	Jameel Husain Junejo	Election Commissioner (TIC)	Human Rights Department
6	Mr Muhammd Arab	Section Officer	Women Development Department
7	Mr Irfan han	Assistant Director	Karachi Metropolitan Corporation
8	M. Kashif amal	Deputy Director	Planning & Monitoring Cell
9	Mr Nadeem Mubasher	Deputy Director	Sindh Social Protection Authority
10	Mr Gulam Mustafa	Assistant Director	Health Department
11	Mr Adnan Ahmad	Deputy Director	National Database and Registration Authority, Sindh
12	Ms Nazia Hossain	Pro. Vice Chancellor	Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi
13	Dr Sakina Riaz	Assistant Professor	University of Karachi
14	Dr Syed Ishad Hussain	Assistant Professor	Shaheed ZA Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Karachi
15	Dr Mehboob	Assistant Professor	Shaheed ZA Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Karachi
16	Prof. Mehboob Khan	Professor	Shaheed ZA Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Karachi
17	Dr Saleema Gulzar	Associate Professor & Director Research and Innovation	Aga Khan University, Karachi
18	Dr Salma Attani	Associate Professor	Aga Khan University, Karachi
19	Dr Shah Mhammad	Senior Research Manager	Aga Khan University, Karachi
20	Mr Manzoo Hussain	Manager Family Planning/Program	Rural Support Program Network, Sindh
21	Dr Zafar Anjum	Manager	Health And Nutrition Development Society, Sindh
22	Ms Kanwal Fatima	Monitoring & Evaluation	World Food Programme, Sindh
23	Ms Shehze Amir	Officer	SDGs & Economic Policy Unit, UNDP, Sindh
24	Ms Amna Sabbir	Advocacy Associate	Legal Aid Society, Karachi
25	Dr Iftikhr Ahmed	Consultant	RIZ Consulting, Karachi
26	Ms Tehmin Azim	Program Manager	Health And Nutrition Development Society Organization, Karachi
27	Ms Kulsum Khan	Project Manager	Greenstar Social, Maternal and Child Health, Karachi
28	Mr Aslam Siddiq	Chief Field Officer	National Committee for Maternal Health, Karachi
29	Mr Zeesha-ul-Rub Jaffri	Chief Executive Officer	Bridge Public Relations, Karachi
30	Mr Adnan Hamad	Deputy Director	National Database and Registration Authority, Sindh
31	Dr Zaib Dhar	Senior Technical Advisor	Pathfinder Organization, Karachi
32	Mr Sameer Qamar	Director Management Information System (MIS) & Monitoring	W. International, Karachi
33	Dr Mah, Executive	Executive Director	Indus Hospital Health Network, Karachi
34	Ms Madiha Yameen	Manager Research & Innovation	School of Nursing and Midwifery, Agha Khan University, Karachi
35	Dr Nida Shoaib	Program Manager	Shaheed ZA Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Karachi

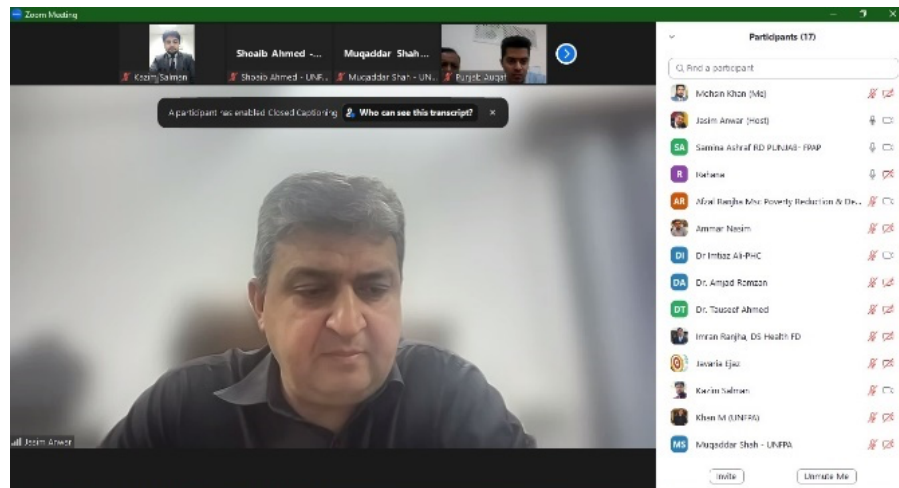
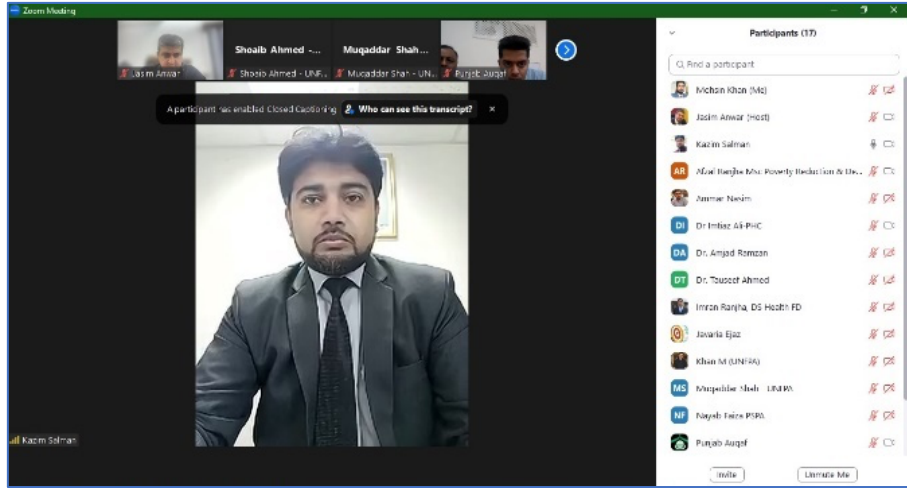
36	Ms Aamna Atif	Manager Communications	Aahung, Karachi
37	Ms Haleem Usman	President	EPRENEUR Associates, Karachi
38	Mr Zarqa Han	Program Coordinator	United Nations Women, Sindh
39	Mr Hafeez Kakar	UN Protection Officer	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sindh
40	Ms Neelam Khan	Deputy Director	Sindh Bureau of Statistics
41	Ms Anila Afar	Assistant Director	Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Sindh
42	Ms Nuzhat Shiren	Chairperson	Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, Karachi
43	Mr Khurra Arsalan	Program Analyst	United Nations Population Fund, Sindh Office
44	Ms Fayza Auif Khan	Program Officer (PPHI)	United Nations Population Fund, Sindh Office
45	Mr Ejaz Amed	Program Assistant	United Nations Population Fund, Sindh Office
46	Ms Umbree Gul	Assistant Director	Benazir Income Support Program, Sindh
47	Mr Ashraf	President	Sindh Graduates Association, Karachi
48	Mr Arslan Member	Member Judicial	Sindh Human Rights Commission, Karachi
49	Ms Anila Afar	Assistant Director	Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Sindh
50	Ms Neelam Khan	Deputy Director	Sindh Bureau of Statistics
51	Muhammad Saleem	Manager (DA)	Karachi
52	Ms Tahazeeb	Deputy Director	Institute of Sindhology & Pakistan Studies, University of Sindh, Karachi
53	Dr Sana Drvesh	Private Sector Advisor	Greenstar, Sindh
54	Dr Kulsum Khan	Project Manager	Greenstar, Sindh
Balochistan			
1	Mr Abdullah Khan	Secretary	Planning & Development Department
2	Mr Syed Naseer Shah	Additional Secretary	Law Department
3	Mr Ghulam Mustafa	Director General CMP	Planning & Development Department
4	Mr Ghulam Mustafa	Director General	Population Welfare Department
5	Dr Ambreen Mengal	Director Tech	Population Welfare Department
6	Mr Ahmad Jan	Deputy Director	Planning & Development Department
7	Mr Daud Durrani	Deputy Director	Social Welfare Department
8	Mr Rehmat Ullah	Assistant Director	Bureau of Statistics
9	Ms Rubina Zahri	Manager	Women Development Department
10	Mr M. Arif Khan	Chief Foreign Aid	Planning & Development Department
11	Mr Shafiq Ahmed	Urdu Secy	Labour Department

12	Dr Wasim Baig	Media Coordinator	Health Department
13	Mr Qabil Khan	HR Officer	Labour Department
14	Mr Abdul Ghani	U.S Information, Information Department	Information Department, Quetta
15	Dr Altaf Fatima	Senior Lecturer	Institute of Public Health Quetta
16	Ms Sadaf Ali Raza	Instructor, Local Government Department	Local Government Department, Balochistan
17	Gul Meena	Project Associate	United Nations Women Balochistan
18	Dr Aqila Bareeh	Health Management Committee Officer	Institute of Public Health Quetta
19	Ms Fouzia Shaheen	Chairperson	Balochistan Commission on the Status of Women, Quetta
20	Dr Farooq Azam Jan	Team Lead	Global Health Supply Chain Procurement and Supply Management (GHSC-PSM) Chemonics, Balochistan
21	Mr Afzal Butt	-	Monitoring, Training, and Evaluation Unit, Rahnuma-Family Planning Association of Pakistan, Balochistan
22	Mr S. Tahir Naqvi	Senior Project Manager	Aman Foundation's Action for Community Transformation program, supported by UNFPA, Balochistan
23	Dr Sarmad Khan	Focal Point	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Annex II. A Glimpse of Provincial & National Workshop

ICPD – Voluntary National Survey, Pakistan Consultative Workshops Punjab (Online)

16th May 2023



ICPD – Voluntary National Survey, Pakistan Consultative Workshops Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Peshawar)

18th May 2023



ICPD – Voluntary National Survey, Pakistan Consultative Workshops, Balochistan (Quetta)

23rd May 2023



ICPD – Voluntary National Survey, Pakistan Consultative Workshops, Sindh (Karachi)

25th May 2023



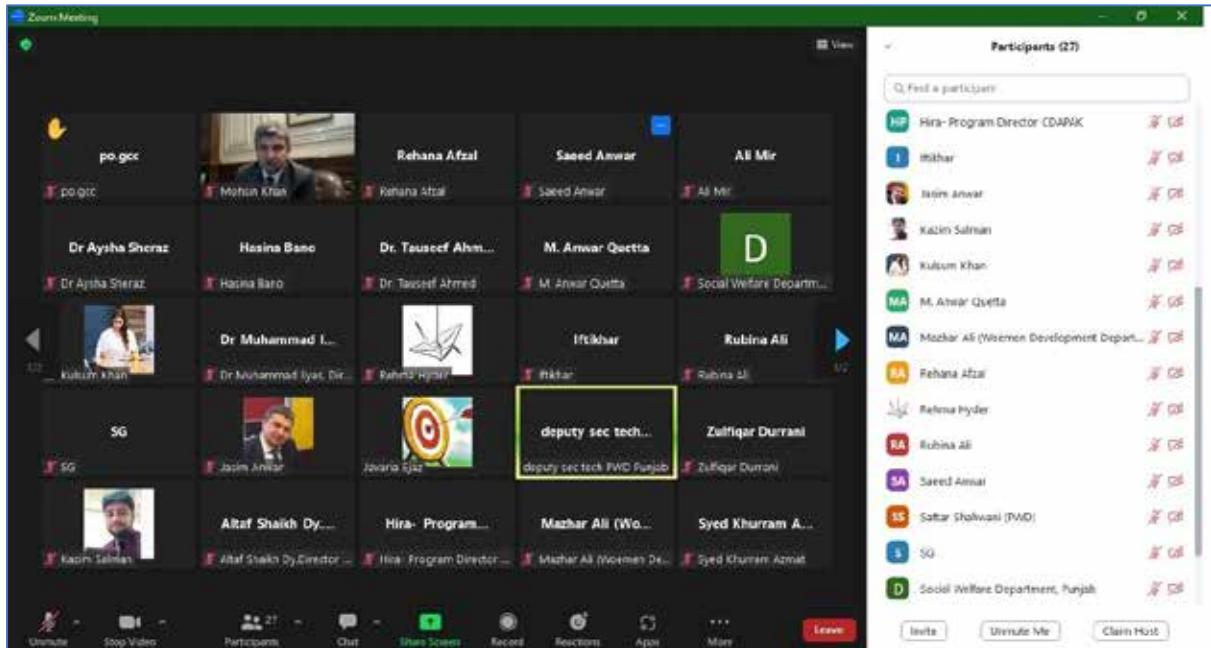
**ICPD – Voluntary National Survey, Pakistan
National Consultative Workshops, (Islamabad)**


29th May 2023



ICPD – Voluntary National Survey, Pakistan National Validation Workshop (Online)

31st May 2023





**VOLUNTARY
NATIONAL REPORT
ON ICPD PROGRESS
IN PAKISTAN**

2023