



Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Pakistan

This country profile on Pakistan was developed as part of the regional mapping study on disability-inclusive education commissioned by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. It aims to provide a snapshot of the key policies, practices and strategies implemented from 2010 to 2020 to ensure children with disabilities learn in inclusive settings in Pakistan. This profile focuses on the country's progress in four domains of an inclusive education system: (1) Enabling Environment, (2) Demand, (3) Service Delivery, and (4) Monitoring and Measuring Quality. Cross-cutting issues, such as gender and humanitarian situations, are also addressed in this document, although not in great depth. More information on the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the mapping study can be found in the full report, *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
BESP	Balochistan Education Sector Plan
CFM	Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ECCE	early childhood care and education
ECE	early childhood education
ECD	early childhood development
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Sector Plan
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEP	National Education Policy
NGO	non-governmental organization
p.	page
PESP	Punjab Education Sector Programme
PIEP	Punjab Inclusive Education Project
PPIU	Policy Planning and Implementation Unit
QAED	Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development
SpED	Special Education Department
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WG	Washington Group on Disability Statistics



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Inclusion is anchored on the fundamental human right to education for all promulgated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



1

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is anchored on the fundamental human right to education for all promulgated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), specifically Article 24, strengthened the global shift towards inclusion by mandating States parties to improve education systems and undertake measures to fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities to quality inclusive education.²

Despite overall progress in education attainment globally, children with disabilities remain one of the most marginalized groups. They are less likely to participate in and complete their education compared to their peers without disabilities.³

In South Asia, an estimated 29 million children – 12.5 million at primary level and 16.5 million at lower secondary level – were out of school in 2018.⁴ Of these, a considerable proportion was estimated to be children with disabilities. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it is not possible to generate statistics that

are regionally or globally representative of the status of persons with disabilities with regard to education because of the scarcity of national data.⁵ This is true for the South Asia region as well.

The lack of disaggregated education data poses a significant challenge for policy and programme development and implementation. In this regard, the United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF ROSA) commissioned a study to:

- map inclusive education policies, strategies and practices implemented at all levels of the education system in the South Asia region that are effective, or promise to be effective, in increasing access and/or learning outcomes of children with disabilities in education and have the potential for scaling up; and
- inform the development and strengthening of regional and country-level advocacy and programming for advancing disability-inclusive education across South Asia.

¹ United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

² United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol, 2006.

³ World Health Organization and The World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2011.

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, ‘Out-of-School rates and numbers by SDG region, 2018’, n.d.

⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, ‘Education and Disability: Analysis of Data from 49 Countries’, Information Paper No. 49, 2018, <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/ip49-education-disability-2018-en.pdf>, accessed 18 December 2020.

The mapping covered interventions towards establishing disability-inclusive education initiated at all levels of the education system in eight countries in the region: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

A theoretical framework was developed to guide the mapping exercise. The framework conceptualized inclusive education through four main domains: (1) Enabling Environment, (2) Demand, (3) Service Delivery, and (4) Measuring and Monitoring Quality. Cross-cutting issues, albeit not covered in great depth, were included in the review to provide an overview of the

intersectionality between disability and gender, and disability and humanitarian issues.

This country profile on Pakistan was developed as part of this regional mapping study on disability-inclusive education. It aims to provide a snapshot of the key policies, practices and strategies implemented from 2010 to 2020 to ensure children with disabilities learn in inclusive settings in Pakistan. More information on the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the mapping survey can be found in the full report, *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*.⁶

⁶ Grimes, P., et al., *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2021.



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Pakistan has taken vital steps to advance the right to education through the provision of free and compulsory education for children aged 5–16.



2

COUNTRY CONTEXT

With a population of around 208 million, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world.⁷ Over the years, the country has experienced significant transformations that have influenced its political, social and economic development.

When the country's 18th Constitutional Amendment was signed into law in 2010, the heavily centralized state structure changed to a decentralized federation, devolving several government functions to the provinces.⁸ Consequently, the functions of the Ministry of Education were devolved to the provinces.⁹ Not only did this support the empowerment of the provinces to develop and implement plans that were contextualized to their own experiences, but various opportunities and challenges were also identified in the country's education system. They included the opportunity to actualize the

right to education while addressing challenges in the lack of capacity and expertise to develop plans and implement programmes at the provincial level.¹⁰

While Pakistan has taken vital steps to advance the right to education through the provision of free and compulsory education for children aged 5–16,¹¹ the government needs to give utmost attention to improving the quality of education, including reforming curriculum, increasing the capacity of teachers and improving the governance mechanisms in the education sector.¹² These challenges impact marginalized groups of children the most, including those with disabilities, who are experiencing difficulties in accessing schools and lack access to relevant learning materials, information and adequately staffed services.¹³

⁷ UNICEF, Country Programme of Communication between the Government of Pakistan and UNICEF 2018–2022 Results for Children, United Nations Children's Fund, 2019.

⁸ UNICEF Pakistan, *Situation Analysis of Children in Pakistan*, United Nations Children's Fund, Islamabad, 2017, www.unicef.org/pakistan/media/596/file/Situation%20Analysis%20of%20Children%20in%20Pakistan.pdf.

⁹ UNESCO Islamabad, Pakistan: UNESCO Country Programming Document 2013–2017, Islamabad, 2013.

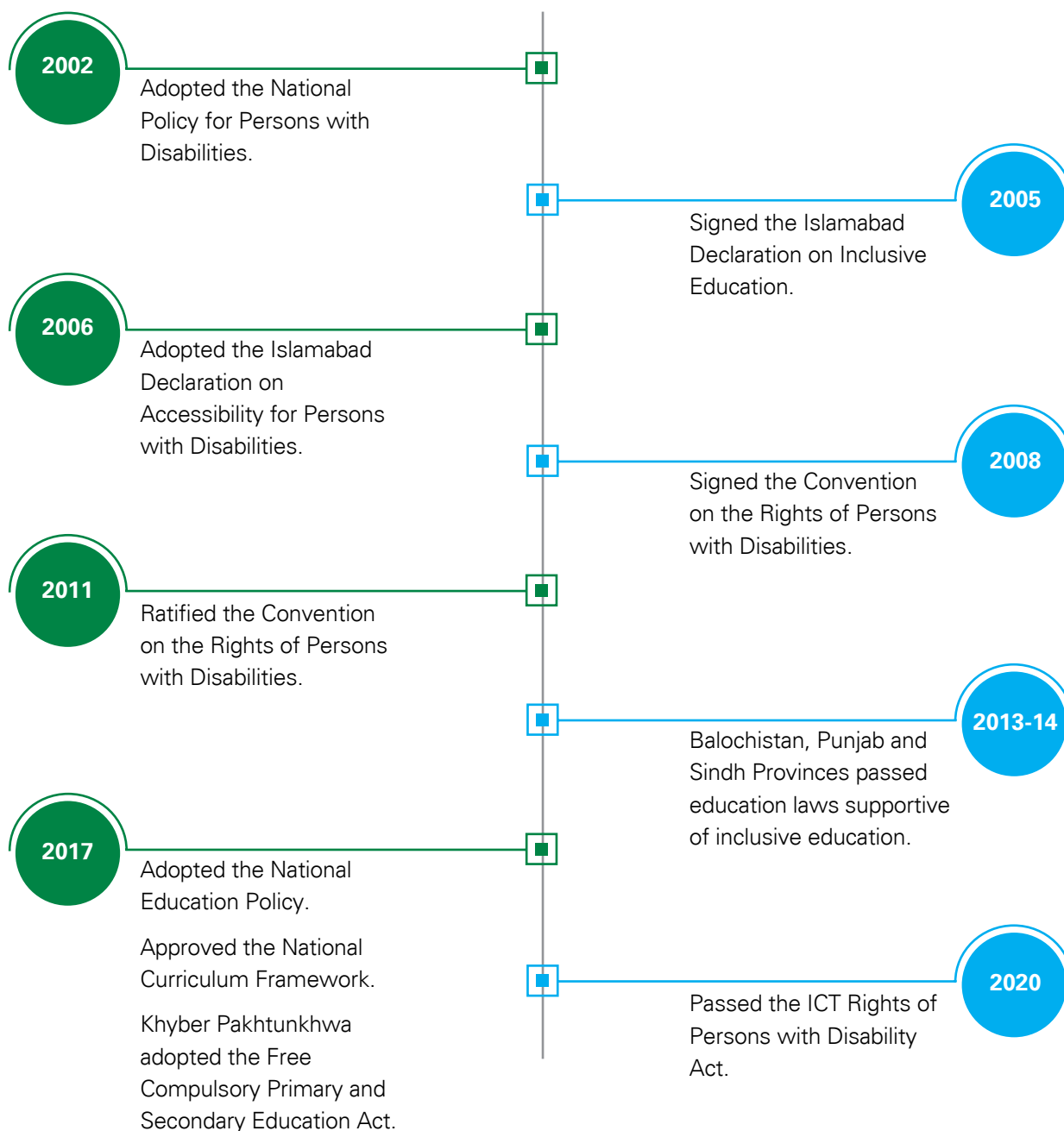
¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Situation Analysis of Children in Pakistan*.

¹² The World Bank, *Pakistan@100: Shaping the Future*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2019, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31335/Pakistanat100Overview.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

¹³ Country Programme of Communication between Government of Pakistan and UNICEF.

Milestones in disability-inclusive education





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Pakistan has made efforts to put in place legislative frameworks responsive to the goals set out in international conventions on inclusive education.

3

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The enabling environment includes interrelated conditions that enable or facilitate the development of a disability-inclusive education system, including policies, disability data, plans, leadership, coordination and financing.

3.1 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Pakistan has made efforts to put in place legislative frameworks responsive to the goals set out in international conventions on inclusive education.

The 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (amended in 2012) provides a broad framework for non-discrimination in education (Article 26) and ensures free and compulsory education for all children aged 5–16 years (Article 25-A).¹⁴ As a State party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and CRPD, Pakistan has made efforts to put in place legislative frameworks responsive to the goals set out in the international conventions.

Key elements of the Pakistan Vision 2025 include investing in human capital, giving focus to the most marginalized groups, such as children with disabilities. Strategies to be employed include improving and expanding social protection systems and social safety nets; improving governance for effective implementation of action plans for children; advocating inclusive education for children with special needs; “enforcement of a special quota in education and employment for non-Muslims and persons with special needs; and the encouragement of sports activities for persons with disabilities”.¹⁵

At the national level, the government has outlined a general framework for disability inclusion in education mainly through policies:

¹⁴ Pakistan, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (2012), www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951.pdf.

¹⁵ *Situation Analysis of Children in Pakistan*.

1. In response to the Biwako Framework,¹⁶ the federal government adopted the **National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002**, operationalized by a National Action Plan in 2006. The policy outlines goals for empowering persons with disabilities by providing directives for them to have access to facilities leading to their full integration in society; participate in the planning and implementation of programmes concerning them; enjoy their rights like other citizens; and have equal access to “medical, education, social, psychological, vocational training, employment and rehabilitation, without any discrimination” (p. 80).¹⁷ However, a report to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights notes that up until 2015, long-term strategies set out in the action plan had not been implemented.¹⁸
2. In 2005, the **Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education** was signed by the federal government and all provincial governments. The declaration provided a working definition of inclusive education as a process to “ensure that all children regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities and socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds are treated with dignity and respect; have equal access to education, health services, work and all other aspects of life; are enabled to develop their full academic, physical, emotional and social potential; have access to learning material

through appropriate media and technical devices; and develop confidence in their abilities, skills and future prospects”.¹⁹

3. The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2009** referred to children with disabilities as ‘handicapped’ children. While the terminology used was problematic and went against inclusive language, the policy aimed to “equalize access to education through the provision of special facilities for girls and boys alike, under-privileged/marginalized groups and handicapped children and adults” (p. 18).²⁰

The policy did not provide clear strategies to this end apart from another broad policy action statement on promoting ‘inclusive and child-friendly education’, adoption of special measures to include ‘special persons’ in mainstream education, literacy and technical and vocational education programmes (p. 19), and forming a team of specialized teacher trainers (p. 43).

A 2016 research report mentioned that there was limited commitment to ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities at the policy level in recent years.²¹ In 2017, a new NEP was adopted, which gave particular attention to inclusive and special education. The policy aims to expand access to inclusive and special education, targeting to bring “50 per cent of all children with disabilities in school by 2025 and create inclusive learning environments in 50 per cent of existing formal education institutions at all levels”.²²

¹⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘The Right of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Decision-Making – Call for submissions’, n.d., www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/DecisionMaking/CSOs_DPOs/CSOs%20-%20AWAM_Pakistan_ENG.doc, accessed 11 March 2020.

¹⁷ Mujahid-Mukhtar, E., *Situation Analysis of the Education Sector*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, n.d., http://developyst.jellyfish.com.pk/files/article/1/National_Final_Report_Education_Policy_Analysis.pdf.

¹⁸ ‘Right of Persons with Disabilities to Participate in Decision-Making’.

¹⁹ Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education, et al., *Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education, 2005*, in *National Report on the Development of Education, Pakistan*, Ministry of Education, Islamabad, 2008, www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/National_Reports/ICE_2008/pakistan_NR08.pdf.

²⁰ Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy 2009*, Islamabad, 2009, https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/pakistan_national_education_policy_2009.pdf.

²¹ Singal, N., ‘Education of Children with Disabilities in India and Pakistan: Critical analysis of developments in the last 15 years’, *Prospects*, vol. 46, 2016, pp. 171–183, doi.org/10.1007/s11125-016-9383-4.

²² Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, *National Education Policy 2017*, Islamabad, 2017, www.academia.edu/37854462/NATIONAL_EDUCATION_POLICY_2017_BY_Ministry_of_Federal_Education_and_Professional_Training_Government_of_Pakistan.

Table 1. Main laws and policies on disability and education

Government's action on international policies	Ratification
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	1990
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)	2011
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Optional Protocol (2006)	No action
Domestic laws and policies on disability and education	Adoption
National level	
National Policy for Persons with Disabilities	2002
Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education	2005
National Plan of Action for the Persons with Disabilities	2006
Islamabad Declaration on Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities	2006
National Education Policy	2017
National Education Policy Framework	2018
ICT [Islamabad Capital Territory] Rights of Persons with Disability Act	2020
Provincial level	
Balochistan Education Act	2014
Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act	2017
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act	2017
Lahore Declaration on Inclusive Education	2015
Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act	2014
Punjab Special Education Policy	2019
Punjab School Education Policy	2020
Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act	2013
Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act	2018

4. The **National Education Policy Framework 2018** provides a framework for priority areas to improve, including (1) decreasing the number of out-of-school children and increasing school participation; (2) ensuring uniformity in education standards, including curriculum learning materials and teaching and learning standards; (3) improving the

quality of education; and (4) enhancing access to relevant skills training.²³

The framework applies to education interventions that will affect all children, but the policy emphasizes that a specific focus on disadvantaged groups, including children with disabilities, would be critical in the achievement of the overall goals.

²³ Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, National Education Policy Framework, Islamabad, 2018, https://aserpakistan.org/document/2018/National_Eductaion_Policy_Framework_2018_Final.pdf.

A historic step for Pakistan is the **ICT [Islamabad Capital Territory] Rights of Persons with Disability Act** approved in 2020. It adopts the key definitions and principles of CRPD. While the establishment of special educational institutions for persons with moderate to severe disabilities is endorsed, it clearly maintains that general education settings must be 'equipped and reasonably staffed' to implement inclusive education.²⁴

Although there is a strong focus on special education at national level, provincial legislation seems to be ahead of national directives in articulating specific provisions for children with disabilities.

The **Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act (2017)** promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community aligned with Islamic teachings.²⁵ The **Balochistan Compulsory Education Act (2014)** guarantees free education for all children aged 5–16 years. Compulsory education, however, is conditional based on abilities. Children with physical or mental disabilities are to attend special education (p. 3).²⁶ Implementation of the Islamabad Declaration in the province has had little success due to a lack of pre-service training on special education, limited teaching staff, inadequate facilities and low enrolment rates.²⁷

Education laws such as the **Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act (2014)** and **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Free Compulsory Primary and Secondary Education Act (2017)** promote non-segregation and prohibit denial of admission to schools.²⁸ In practice, however, children with disabilities mostly receive education in special schools.

The **Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2013)** echoes the goal of education for all children aged 5–16 years,²⁹ but makes no reference to inclusive education or an intention to transition from segregated to more inclusive provisions. A policy review recommended a paradigm shift from a charity-based to a rights-based approach.³⁰

A critical first step is attuning definitions with internationally accepted conventions. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002 subscribes to a medically oriented definition of disability (see Table 2).

3.2 DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE SECTOR PLAN

The introduction of inclusive education is more expressly articulated in the most recent education sector plans, indicating a progressive transition from special education to more inclusive approaches.

The **Balochistan Education Sector Analysis 2020–25** reveals inclusive education as an area given inadequate attention,³¹ despite being articulated as a priority area in the previous Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2013–2018.³²

In the latest BESP (2020–2025), to the extent possible, children with special needs should be educated in regular schools. Furthermore, the plan aims to expand access to schools, improve the capacity of the Directorate of Special Education and increase community acceptance

²⁴ Pakistan, ICT Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020), www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1578658292_632.pdf.

²⁵ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 'Initial report submitted by Pakistan under Article 35 of the Convention', due in 2013, United Nations, 2019.

²⁶ Balochistan Provincial Assembly Secretariat, Balochistan Compulsory Education Act (2014).

²⁷ Khan, A. S., *Policy Analysis of Education in Balochistan*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Islamabad, Islamabad, 2011.

²⁸ UNESCO, Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER): Pakistan, 2020, <https://education-profiles.org/central-and-southern-asia/pakistan/~inclusion>.

²⁹ Provincial Assembly of Sindh, The Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2013).

³⁰ Ali, S., *Policy Analysis of Education in Sindh*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2011.

³¹ Society for Community Strengthening and Promotion of Education, *Education Sector Analysis for Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020–25*, United Nations Children's Fund, n.d.

³² Government of Balochistan, Policy Planning and Implementation Unit, Education Department, Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2013–2018, 2014, www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/Balochistan-EducationSectorPlan-5March2014.pdf.

Table 2. Definitions of disability and inclusive education according to national laws and policies and international definitions

Terminology	Definition based on national laws and policies	International definition
Disability	<p>“Disability means a long term physical or mental condition that limits a person’s movements, senses or activities and shall include physical, mental, intellectual and developmental disorders or sensory impairments...”</p> <p>– ICT Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2020</p>	<p>“Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”</p> <p>– Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006</p>
Inclusive education	<p>“Inclusive education is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.”*</p> <p>“The concept of inclusion is beneficial not merely for children with special needs only; it applies to all children, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, personality characteristics, or economic status of their parents.”</p> <p>– National Education Policy 2017</p>	<p>“Inclusive education is the result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminate barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all students.”</p> <p>– General Comment No. 4 (2016) to Article 24, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p>
Special educational needs	<p>Based on the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002, the relevant government departments identify special educational needs under four categories, namely, visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disabilities and intellectual disabilities.</p>	<p>“Broad group of persons for whom schools need to adapt their curriculum, teaching method and organization, in addition to providing additional human or material resources to stimulate efficient and effective learning.”</p> <p>– UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Data for the Sustainable Development Goals Glossary</p>

* UNESCO, *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education For All*, Paris, 2005, p. 13 as cited in Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, National Education Policy 2017, Islamabad, p. 117, https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/pakistan_national_education_policy_2017-2025.pdf.

towards children with special needs.³³ However, education for children with special needs remain within the purview of the Social Welfare, Special Education, Literacy, Non-formal Education & Human Rights Department instead of general education.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Education Sector Analysis 2019 includes a chapter on inclusive education, conceptualized in a broad sense to include marginalized groups of children as a result of gender, poverty, religion, ethnicity and disability. The analysis outlines in great detail the situation, challenges, opportunities and key priority programmes to bridge gaps, while building on existing initiatives.³⁴

The 2013–2018 Five Years of Education Reform document reaffirms the growing commitment to inclusion, stating the need for “a broader push for the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools”.³⁵

The Education Blueprint 2018–2023³⁶ intends to bring the inclusive education agenda from the Ministry of Welfare back to the jurisdiction of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, where it is more appropriate. This step is expected to generate better results for children with disabilities.

The new Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2020–2025 also emphasizes inclusive education with a focus on disability-friendly infrastructure, teacher training programmes on disability sensitization and inclusive teaching methods.

The **Punjab Education Sector Plan 2019–2023 Situation Analysis**³⁷ highlights the lack of

pre-service training on catering to children with special needs as a pressing challenge in teacher quality. Issues on access, equity, participation and learning outcomes in relation to disability were not analysed in detail.

Nevertheless, the Punjab ESP lays down a strong foundation for gradually addressing the exclusion of children with disabilities. Principles of learner-centred approaches and equitable access are evident in the ESP. Inclusive education is identified as a priority programme to “establish an enabling environment for children with special needs in mainstream schools and institutions” (p. 49).³⁸

Concrete strategies include the formulation of a special education policy and implementation framework ensuring schools are disability friendly; review of curriculum, textbooks and learning materials and assessment framework to ensure responsiveness; training teachers on inclusive practices, screening and assessment tests to identify children with disability in formal schools; enhancing data collection on disability through the Programme Monitoring and Implementation Unit; promoting partnerships to augment support to special education; and developing a communication strategy to encourage parents to send their children to schools or special education centres.³⁹

The **School Education Sector Plan and Roadmap for Sindh 2019–2024**⁴⁰ endeavours to increase the number of children with disabilities mainstreamed in formal schools. It notes that for the first time in the School Education & Literacy Department teachers will be trained on inclusive education.

³³ Government of Balochistan, Secondary Education Department, Policy Planning and Implementation Unit, Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020–25, 2020, <http://emis.gob.pk/Uploads/BESP2020-25.pdf>.

³⁴ Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Analysis 2019*, 2019.

³⁵ Alif Ailaan, *2013–2018 Five Years of Education Reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Wins, losses and challenges for 2018–2023*, Alif Ailaan, Islamabad, 2018, www.academia.edu/37803377/Five_Years_of_Education_Reforms_in_Balochistan_Wins_Losses_and_Challenges_for_Future.

³⁶ Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Elementary & Secondary Education Department, Education Blueprint 2018–2023, 2018.

³⁷ Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, *Punjab Education Sector Plan 2019–2023 Situation Analysis*, 2018.

³⁸ Government of Punjab, Punjab Education Sector Plan (2019/20–2023/24), 2019.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Government of Sindh, School Education and Literacy Department, The School Education Sector Plan and Roadmap for Sindh (2019–2024), 2019.

3.3 DATA ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The absence of reliable data on children with disabilities is a challenge in Pakistan, however, emerging practices provide a sound evidence base.

The challenge in disability data is consistently referred to in policy documents. Across the country, identification and data collection methodologies vary and to harmonize existing mechanisms, alongside aligning policy directions on data, is imperative.

The use of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) set of questions and the WG/

UNICEF Module on Child Functioning is apparent in recent data collection initiatives.

Demographic and Health Survey findings indicate 13 per cent of the household population are living with a disability.

The most recent Demographic and Health Survey (2017–2018) adopted the WG Short Set on Functioning and collected information on six core functional domains (seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care and communication). Findings revealed that 13 per cent of household members aged 5 years and above had some level of difficulty in at least one functional domain.⁴¹

Table 3. Main sources of disability data

Method/data type	Data collection activity/system	Responsible agency	Frequency	Latest report available	Includes data on children with disabilities	Adopted CFM or WG Questions
Administrative data	Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)	ASER Pakistan	Annual	2019	Yes	Yes
	Education Management Information System per province	Varies per province				
Census	Population Census 2017	Bureau of Statistics	No information available	No information available	No information available	No information available
Survey	Demographic and Health Survey	National Institute of Population Studies	No information available	2017–2018*	Yes	Yes

CFM: WG/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning; WG: Washington Group on Disability Statistics.

* National Institute of Population Studies, ‘Disability Data, Disability by domain and age’, 2021, www.nips.org.pk/page/disability-data.

⁴¹ National Institute of Population Studies - NIPS/Pakistan and ICF, *Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18*, NIPS and ICF, Islamabad, Pakistan, and Rockville, Maryland, 2019.

Over 20 per cent of schools in Pakistan are catering to children with disabilities.⁴²

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is the most comprehensive source of disability data in the country.

The latest ASER in 2019 found that:

- over 20 per cent of all schools cater to children with disabilities;
- 22.2 per cent and 16.6 per cent of surveyed government and private schools, respectively, have children with disabilities enrolled;
- more boys reported having a disability (0.2 per cent in government schools, 0.3 per cent in private schools) than girls (0.1 per cent in both government and private schools);
- among children with disabilities, 41.4 per cent have physical disabilities, 12.1 per cent have behavioural disabilities and 11.8 per cent have multiple disabilities;

- 2.1 per cent of government schools and 2 per cent of private schools have ramps, regardless of whether they had a child with disability enrolled; and
- 3.9 per cent of surveyed government schools and 7 per cent of private schools have disability-friendly toilets.

Balochistan

In general, the participation of children in education is low, with an estimated 65 per cent of school-aged children out of school.⁴³

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2008 results showed that 6 per cent of children aged 2–9 years old had at least one disability.⁴⁴ In 2017, the Elementary and Secondary Education Department’s census on out-of-school children revealed that almost 25,000 children were out of school in the province as a result of disabilities.⁴⁵

Table 4. Proportion of schools with children with disabilities enrolled and proportion of enrolled students with a disability (%), 2019

Province/Region	Proportion of schools reporting children with disabilities (%)	Proportion of enrolled students who have a disability (%)
Azad Jammu and Kashmir	19.4	0.23
Balochistan	11.5	0.28
Federally Administered Tribal Areas	23.7	0.42
Gilgit-Baltistan	28.4	0.40
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	30.6	0.53
Punjab	20.8	0.24
Sindh	10.5	0.11
Total	20.4	0.29

Source: ASER Pakistan, *Annual Status of Education Report 2019, 2020*

⁴² ASER Pakistan, *Annual Status of Education Report 2019, 2020*.

⁴³ *Education Sector Analysis for Balochistan*.

⁴⁴ Planning and Development Department, Government of NWFP [North West Frontier Province], *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2008, Final Report*, Peshawar, NWFP, Pakistan, 2010, <https://phkh.nhsrcc.gov.pk/sites/default/files/2019-07/MICS%20Khyber%20Pakhtunkhwa%202010.pdf>.

⁴⁵ *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Analysis 2019*.

Punjab

In Punjab, the Teaching Effectively All Children project conducted a survey on children aged 5–17 years based on the WG set of questions. Findings revealed that 11 per cent of children aged 8–12 years reported having some form of disability. The report highlights the multiple deprivation effects when disability, gender and poverty intersect.⁴⁶

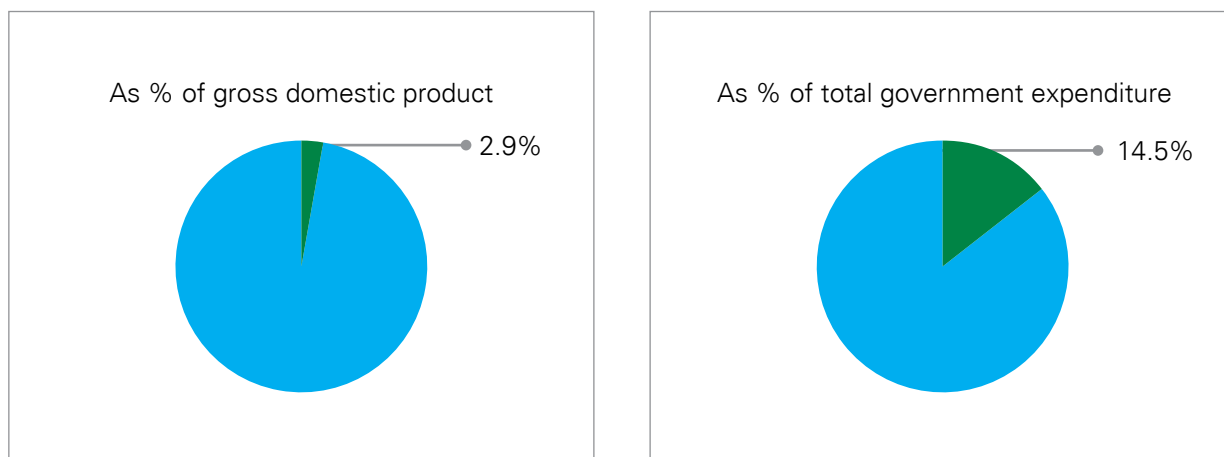
A significant development in disability data collection, the Annual School Census of the Punjab School Education Department included disaggregated data on disability for the first time, which were integrated into the province’s Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Annual School Census 2020–2021 report.⁴⁷

3.4 FUNDING AND FINANCING

Spending on education in Pakistan is below international benchmarks, indicating a need to increase investments in education, especially in interventions to facilitate disability-inclusive education.

Based on data from UNESCO’s Sustainable Development Goal 4 monitoring,⁴⁸ the country’s investments towards education are below the benchmarks set by the Incheon Declaration (see Figure 1), which were to allocate at least 4–6 per cent of gross domestic product to education and/or allocate at least 15–20 per cent of public expenditure to education.⁴⁹

Figure 1. Government expenditure on education (%), 2017



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, ‘Sustainable Development Goal 4 Country Profile: Pakistan’, n.d.

⁴⁶ Singal, N., and R. Malik, ‘Disability Data For Effective Policy Design: Reflections From The TEACH Project In Pakistan’, 2019, www.washingtongroup-disability.com/wg-blog/disability-data-for-effective-policy-design-reflections-from-the-teach-project-in-pakistan-92.

⁴⁷ Government of Punjab, Programme Monitoring & Implementation Unit, Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme, *Annual School Census 2020-21*, 2021, www.pesrp.edu.pk/downloads/school_census/2020_21/School_Census_Report_2020_21.pdf.

⁴⁸ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, ‘Sustainable Development Goal 4 Country Profile: Pakistan’, n.d., <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/countryprofiles/PK.pdf>.

⁴⁹ UNESCO, *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015, http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf.

There is a serious need to increase investments towards education on the whole and to interventions facilitative of disability-inclusive education specifically. Data on provincial budgets are limited. However, the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey results indicate common challenges in financing inclusion include:

- the lack of policy commitment to fund disability-inclusive education;
- no explicit or separate budget dedicated to inclusive education;
- funding mostly focused on supporting special schools; and
- absence of credible data on disability and cost-effective models and evaluation to generate evidence, which is among the key challenges for policymakers in evidence-based planning and budgeting.

3.5 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Coordination is a critical bottleneck in disability-inclusive education.

Vertical coordination is present for improving education quality. Aside from weak coordination between national and subnational education units, inclusive education is only beginning to be integrated into the functions of the agencies responsible for elementary and secondary school education (see Table 5). These mechanisms have yet to be utilized to support disability-inclusive education at the school level.

Cross-sectoral coordination between the key ministries and departments that can facilitate inclusion, such as Ministry of Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment

Department, Elementary and Secondary Education Department and the technical, vocational and skills development centres, is limited, and no clear coordination mechanisms are present between the organizations.⁵⁰

The education of children with disabilities is within the mandate of the Ministry of Human Rights at the national level⁵¹ and within departments working in social welfare and protection at the provincial level,^{52,53,54} and cross-sectoral coordination that can facilitate disability-inclusive education is limited.

When the management of the education of children with disabilities is outside the ministry responsible for managing mainstream education, the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream settings becomes challenging and could perpetuate segregation and the medical model of disability.

Furthermore, ensuring that children with disabilities have access to the same high-quality curriculum as children without disabilities would be difficult without mechanisms ensuring the collaboration between the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, and an inclusive education policy at the federal level protecting the right of children with disabilities to access quality education with their peers as articulated in CRPD.

Devolving the responsibility for education delivery from the federal to the provincial level lends challenges to a standardized response in ensuring the right of children with disabilities to education. This has made it challenging for collecting standardized and relevant data on disability

⁵⁰ *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Analysis 2019*.

⁵¹ Ministry of Human Rights, Directorate General of Special Education, 'Brief of Directorate General of Special Education', Islamabad, 2020, www.mohr.gov.pk/Detail/MzYzY2VkMzctMGZjYi00YjRhLWFiNDktMTA3ZDdjNWJiMTM3.

⁵² Government of Balochistan, Social Welfare, Special Education, Literacy, Non-formal Education & Human Rights Department, 'Balochistan disabled complex for special education, Quetta', 2020, www.swd.balochistan.gov.pk/special%20education.html.

⁵³ Government of Punjab, School Education Department, 'Functions', 2020, <https://schools.punjab.gov.pk/ourfunctions>, accessed: 13 October 2020.

⁵⁴ Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, 'Special Education Institutions', n.d., https://swkpk.gov.pk/?page_id=9.

and in ensuring the provision of resources and availability of support services at the community level across all provinces.⁵⁵

Another challenge concerning leadership, management and coordination structures is the absence of a clear articulation and delineation of the roles of different sectors (education, health, social protection) in inclusive education.

Directives in policies can serve as guidance for education leaders.

The broad aspirations articulated in policies, such as the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2002, Islamabad Declaration on Inclusive Education 2005 and National Policy on Education 2009, although not explicit on strategies in strengthening leadership, can serve as a guide for education leaders throughout the system in providing disability-inclusive education for all learners.

The National Plan of Action on Education for All (EFA) 2001–2015 gives priority to universal primary education with an emphasis on ensuring that all children, in particular children from marginalized groups, have access to quality education. To strengthen inclusive school leadership, the plan includes capacity building of headteachers as well as clarifying their role in instructional leadership and in engaging the school community in governance.⁵⁶ However,

the inclusion of children with disabilities and their education in inclusive mainstream settings was not explicitly mentioned in the plan.

The Higher Education Commission provides guidelines on the non-discrimination and admission of students with disabilities to higher education institutions. The policy guides education leaders on the inclusion of students with disabilities by providing directives on access, accommodation and teacher and staff training related to disability-inclusive education.⁵⁷

School management committees encourage parents and the school community to participate in school governance.

The responsibilities of the school management committee that can encourage disability-inclusive education include:⁵⁸

- taking part in encouraging the attendance of all children in school;
- playing an oversight role by reporting cases of absences and tardiness of schoolteachers and staff;
- organizing academic and extracurricular activities; and
- managing a bank account to access government funds for school developmental activities.

These responsibilities encourage the participation of the school community in decision-making.

⁵⁵ 'Special Education Institutions', https://swkpk.gov.pk/?page_id=9.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Education, Second Draft National Plan of Action on Education for All (2001–2015), Islamabad, 2002, <https://bangkok.unesco.org/sites/default/files/assets/ECCE/publications/National%20plans/PakistanNatlPlan.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Higher Education Commission, Policy for Students with Disabilities at Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan, 2019.

⁵⁸ Balochistan Compulsory Education Act (2014).

Table 5. Government units responsible for disability-inclusive education

Sector	Government unit/organization and responsibility
Education – national level	<p>Directorate General of Special Education, Ministry of Human Rights Provides “education training and rehabilitation for children facing physical or mental challenges”. (www.mohr.gov.pk/Detail/MzYzY2VkMzctMGZjYi00YjRhLWFiNDktMTA3ZDdjNWJiMTM3)</p> <p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rehabilitation, special education and training of persons with disabilities; • primary, secondary and higher secondary education and vocational training of children/persons with disabilities; • providing in-service training for special education professionals; • developing curriculum for children with disabilities; • developing adapted learning materials; and • conducting workshops and forums for awareness-raising. <p>Plans include promoting inclusive education in public and private schools in partnership with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.</p> <p>Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Responsible for the synergy and cohesion of education policies and reforms at the national level. Particular roles with a direct impact on quality education and inclusion are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting standards for education; • leading national programmes on equity; • collecting, analysing and disseminating information on education indicators, such as student learning and resource allocation; and • coordinating a national academic evaluation. <p>Higher Education Commission (HEC) “Independent, autonomous, and constitutionally established institution of primary funding, overseeing, regulating, and accrediting the higher education efforts in Pakistan.” (www.hec.gov.pk/english/aboutus/pages/aboutus.aspx)</p> <p>Developed a policy facilitating the access of persons with disabilities to both private and public higher education institutions in Pakistan.</p>

Table 5 (continued)

Sector	Government unit/organization and responsibility
	<p>Federal Directorate of Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans, develops and delivers in-service teacher training and school staff training. • Provides textbooks to primary school students. • Worked with HEC in introducing a four-year bachelor’s programme, which has been offered in the University of Education since 2017. • Collaborated with National Curriculum Council in revising the curriculum for primary education. • Conducts national examinations. • Collects data and analyses results on education quality. • Monitors and evaluates and reports. • Manages teaching staff of educational institutions. <hr/> <p>Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training</p> <p>Responsible for the oversight of intermediate and secondary education, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “organises, regulates and controls” secondary and higher secondary institutions in Pakistan (www.fbise.edu.pk/introduction.php); • provides recommendations on course content in secondary and higher secondary institutions; • conducts national examinations; and • institutionalizes improvement of the physical well-being of students in secondary and higher secondary institutions. <p>Academy of Educational Planning and Management, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training</p> <p>Training institute for education managers in finance and administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and delivers in-service training modules for planners and administrators in the education system. • Provides pre-service training to aspiring education managers and administrators. • Monitors performance of trainees and provides recommendations for improvement of capacity building programmes. • Organizes forums on educational planning and management. • Monitors and evaluates education programmes nationwide. • Consolidates data from the provincial Education Management Information System at the federal level.

Table 5 (continued)

Sector	Government unit/organization and responsibility
	<p>National Commission for Human Development Government support agency to the federal and provincial governments for the achievement of universal education and access to health facilities for all by “acting as a support organization at the grassroots to fill the implementation gaps through community participation”. (www.nchd.org.pk/ws/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47:about-wht-we-do&catid=1:pages&Itemid=51)</p> <p>The commission provides capacity building for government departments and agencies and community organizations. It works towards universal primary education through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collecting data on out-of-school children through a house-to-house census; • engaging the community to promote enrolment of children in school; • establishing feeder schools in areas with no government schools; • organizing capacity building workshops for primary school teachers on quality education; • providing teachers to government schools with high enrolment rates; and • providing education for learners with disabilities through the National Commission for Human Development Functional Literacy Centres. <hr/> <p>Disability-inclusive education is not explicitly mentioned as part of the commission’s programmes and projects for universal primary education.</p>
<p>Education – provincial level</p>	<p>Education departments responsible for primary and secondary education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balochistan: Directorate of Education – develops, implements and conducts monitoring and evaluation of education policies and strategies to improve the quality of education; and constructs schools in areas where there is low access. • Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Elementary and Secondary Education Department – responsible for supervising and managing primary and secondary education, improving access to education and ensuring facilities are sufficient for the number of students in schools. It is also mandated to provide education to children with mild disabilities. o Social Welfare Department – responsible for supervising and managing special education.

Table 5 (continued)

Sector	Government unit/organization and responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punjab: School Education Department – responsible for policy formulation and planning; development of curriculum and syllabus; development and publication of textbooks for primary to secondary and higher secondary education; and provision of pre-service and in-service training of teachers, standardized assessments and examinations, and scholarships. Its mandate was revised to include the provision of inclusive education in mainstream schools for children with mild and moderate disabilities. • Sindh: School Education and Literacy Department – responsible for improving access to and quality of early childhood education, primary and secondary education for all children, including those from marginalized groups; improving learning outcomes by building the capacity of teachers and improving teaching and learning; and capacity building throughout the education system for improved service delivery and governance. <p>Departments responsible for teacher training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balochistan: Directorate of Colleges and Higher Education – includes training in-service and pre-service teachers and providing support to higher education institutions. • Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Provincial Institute for Teacher Education – responsible for the design of teacher professional development programmes in the province, including school-based continuous professional development programmes; training trainers for delivery and implementation of capacity building programmes; and data collection on the professional development of teachers and education managers. • Punjab: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Training Directorate, Punjab Higher Education Commission – responsible for pre-service teacher training and teacher induction. o Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development – mandated to provide in-service continuous professional development of teachers from pre-primary, primary, middle and secondary education (pre-primary to Grade 10). • Sindh: Provincial Institute of Teacher Education – conducts pre-service and in-service training for teachers; strengthens the capacity of educational leaders and managers; provides quality assurance of teacher education programmes; and conducts research on teacher education.

Table 5 (continued)

Sector	Government unit/organization and responsibility
	<p>Departments responsible for special education, which are separate from the Department of Education at the provincial level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balochistan: Social Welfare, Special Education, Literacy, Non-formal Education and Human Rights Department – manages special education schools where children are segregated into schools according to their disability (e.g., hearing impairments, physical impairments, visual impairments and intellectual disabilities). • Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department – manages special education schools where children are segregated into schools according to their disability (e.g., hearing impairments, physical impairments, visual impairments and intellectual disabilities). • Punjab: Special Education Department – manages special education schools where children are segregated into schools according to their disability (e.g., hearing impairments, physical impairments, visual impairments and intellectual disabilities); provides training for special educators; develops learning materials for children with disabilities; develops curriculum for special education; organizes awareness campaigns on social inclusion of children with disabilities. • Sindh: Special Education Department – manages the delivery of special education to children with disabilities.
Education – school level	School management committees/village education committees – composed of school community members engaged in school governance.

Source: Ministry of Human Rights, Directorate General of Special Education, 'Brief of Directorate General of Special Education', Islamabad, 2020; Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 'Introduction', Islamabad, 2020; Higher Education Commission, 'About Us', n.d.; Higher Education Commission, Policy for Students with Disabilities at Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan, 2019; Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad, 'Schools', 2020; Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad, 'Colleges', 2020; Federal Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education Islamabad, 'Introduction', 2020; Academy of Educational Planning and Management, 'Academy of Educational Planning & Management', 2020; National Commission for Human Development, 'What we do', n.d.; National Commission for Human Development, 'Universal Primary Education', n.d.; National Commission for Human Development, 'Success stories', n.d.; Government of Balochistan, 'Balochistan EMIS Quality Education without Discrimination', 2020; Government of Punjab, School Education Department, 'Functions', 2020; Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 'Functions', 2020; Institute of Social and Policy Sciences, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Analysis 2019*, 2019; Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Swat Education Department, 'SED Introduction', 2020; Government of Sindh, School Education and Literacy Department, 'Our mission', 2020; Government of Punjab, Punjab Higher Education Commission, 'Training Directorate', 2020; Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 'Provincial Institute of Teacher Education', 2020; Asian Development Bank, 'School Sector Governance in Sindh', 2019; Government of Balochistan, Social Welfare, Special Education, Literacy, Non-formal Education & Human Rights Department, 'Balochistan disabled complex for special education, Quetta', 2020; Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, 'Special Education Institutions', n.d.; UNICEF ROSA inclusive education mapping survey, 2020; Ministry of Education, Second Draft National Plan of Action on Education for All (2001–2015), Islamabad, 2002.



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It is only recently that there has been a focus on disability inclusion as more focus had been given to child safety, nutrition and gender equity in education due to the political and sociocultural context of the country.

4

DEMAND

This domain focuses on initiatives supporting children with disabilities and their families to improve knowledge on their rights, demand for inclusive services, encourage changes in attitudes and behaviour and increase participation in education. It includes involving the wider community, forging partnerships and putting in place systems and structures to facilitate meaningful engagement.

4.1 FAMILY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

UNESCO's bottom-up approach aims to enhance community engagement.

UNESCO Islamabad articulates its strategy in engaging local communities as a bottom-up approach through stronger community involvement and stakeholder oversight.⁵⁹ This entails the active participation of communities in planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of programmes that are meaningful to them.

Coordination mechanisms are present at national and local levels, however, there is limited focus on children with disabilities.

UNICEF's role as the coordinating agency for the Global Partnership for Education in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh helped harmonize ESPs to facilitate an enabling policy environment in education.

UNICEF provides vertical coordination between provincial-level ESPs and the federal government's education agenda.⁶⁰ UNICEF's work includes providing lead technical support to the development of ESPs, together with the

⁵⁹ UNESCO Country Programming Document 2013–2017.

⁶⁰ UNICEF Pakistan, *Country Office Annual Report 2018, Pakistan*, Islamabad, 2018.

United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, World Bank, local education groups and UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.⁶¹

The Planning Commission, Provincial Planning Departments and Education Departments jointly serve as the secretariat for the Education Ministers' Conference through which an annual national summit on education is organized. The conference is held to review and assess the education situation and develop strategies to fulfil national and international commitments.⁶²

UNICEF Pakistan belongs to a technical working group for early childhood education (ECE) coordination in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Key achievements of the technical working group include the situation analysis report, which informed the ECE policy in 2019, and development of age-appropriate supplementary reading materials for ECE in English and Urdu.⁶³

The Pakistan National Nutrition Coordination Council is a multisectoral coordination mechanism created to address stunting and malnutrition in the country.⁶⁴ The National Nutrition Survey 2018 found that the stunting rate was 40.9 per cent for boys and 39.4 per cent for girls, while functional disability among children aged 2–5 years was at 12.7 per cent in one of six domains of the Washington Group.⁶⁵

Balochistan

The Policy Planning and Implementation Unit (PPIU) was established in 2010 to develop and coordinate reforms in education. PPIU drafted the compulsory education law, conducted a

curriculum development project and drafted an ESP with the technical support of UNICEF and UNESCO.⁶⁶

The Action Plan for Balochistan gives priority to strengthening parent-teacher school monitoring committees and PPIU capacity to develop, coordinate and oversee reform in the province',⁶⁷ among others.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The sector plan of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, with support from the federal government and development partners, attempts to address issues on regional, socio-economic and gender disparities; access; education and service quality; infrastructure; training of teachers; and governance.⁶⁸

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act 2010 requires the formation of an inter-ministerial coordination group called the Child Protection and Welfare Commission. The commission serves as the focal point and coordinating agency for all matters regarding child rights, including the development and implementation of policies, plans and programmes for the development, protection, participation and rehabilitation of children at risk, which include children with disabilities.

The commission works to coordinate initiatives at provincial and local levels, as well as with the National Commission on the Rights of Children. It is chaired by the Minister for the Social Welfare and Women Development Department and is composed of representatives of departments, such as the Departments of Finance; Home

⁶¹ *Country Office Annual Report 2018.*

⁶² Mujahid-Mukhtar, *Situation Analysis of the Education Sector.*

⁶³ *Country Office Annual Report 2018.*

⁶⁴ UNICEF Pakistan, *Country Office Annual Report 2019, Pakistan*, Islamabad, 2019.

⁶⁵ Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, *National Nutrition Survey 2018: Key findings report*, United Nations Children's Fund Pakistan, Islamabad, 2018.

⁶⁶ Mujahid-Mukhtar, *Situation Analysis of the Education Sector.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

and Tribal Affairs; Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights; Local Government; Election and Rural Development; and Elementary Education; and representatives from civil society organizations, provincial assembly, lawyers, Pakistan Ulema Council and the Chief Protection Officer. The Act also articulates the need to include civilian women representatives and those who specialize in child protection.⁶⁹

The Child Protection Unit at the district level works under the Child Protection and Welfare Commission. The district social welfare officer is in charge of the office with duties that include registration and collection of data on children at risk and their families; assessment of the needs of the child at risk and their families (such as protection, education, medical intervention, shelter); coordination of services required for the child and their family; follow-up and monitoring of the child; review of intervention plans; and development of 'consultative community structures', such as Child Protection Committees that will support child protection and welfare efforts.⁷⁰

Punjab

The federal government elected in 2018 called for a devolution of powers from the federal to the provincial level. District Education Authorities were formed to strengthen service delivery by coordinating and operationalizing plans and programmes in the districts.⁷¹

The Punjab Local Government Act 2013 formalizes the control of government schools by District Education Authorities, while the Punjab ESP 2013–2017 empowers school

councils to provide opportunities for greater participation of parents and the community in education management.⁷² Parents, however, note that schools provide limited engagement opportunities, while teachers report that most parents lack interest in their children's learning.⁷³

Building a coordination mechanism between the School Education Department and Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority is part of the strategies mentioned in ESP as an effort to link general education to technical and vocational education.⁷⁴

Sindh

NEP 2009 provided for the formation of an interprovincial coordination body at the federal level.⁷⁵

4.2 AWARENESS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

A national strategy on raising awareness of disability inclusion is needed.

UNICEF supported the drafting of the national early childhood development (ECD) framework, along with a parenting package that incorporates awareness-raising activities for marginalized families.⁷⁶ ECE is a key component of UNICEF's country programming. UNICEF conducted enrolment campaigns to promote ECD and to bring more children, especially girls, to school.

While there are no aggregated data showing enrolment of children with disabilities in ECE centres, there were reportedly 99,400 children (58 per cent girls) across 2,784 ECE centres who

⁶⁹ Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act (2010), https://swkpk.gov.pk/?page_id=1449.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Punjab Education Sector Plan (2019/20–2023/24).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Government of Punjab, School Education Department, Second Punjab Education Sector Programme (PESP II): Inclusive education strategy 2019–2024, Mott Macdonald Cambridge Education, 2019.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Mujahid-Mukhtar, *Situation Analysis of the Education Sector*.

⁷⁶ *Country Office Annual Report 2019*.

were able to access high-quality ECE.⁷⁷ There is a need to improve data collection on children with disabilities in and out of school to help develop an evidence-based strategy on raising awareness on rights-based education and disability inclusion.

Due to the political and sociocultural context of the country, more focus had been given to child safety, nutrition and gender equity in education. It is only recently that there has been a focus on disability inclusion. As such, a comprehensive social and behavioural analysis is important to gain an understanding of current knowledge and persisting attitudes and beliefs on disability and inclusion in education to build a strong evidence base for communication planning for social change.

Punjab underscores disability inclusion in its education plan

The Second Punjab Education Sector Programme (PESP II) reports efforts to

increase awareness on inclusion in education in Punjab. The Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) has introduced inclusive education in their training to increase awareness of education managers. Organizations advocating for women's and child rights have contributed to awareness-raising and positive change in behaviour and attitudes.⁷⁸ However, these initiatives give no, or to a very limited extent, focus on disability inclusion.

PESP II mentions that the Special Education Department's (SpED) Strategic Communications Plan includes strategies on attitudinal changes.

The Punjab Inclusive Education Project (PIEP) includes raising awareness on the right of children with disabilities to learn alongside their peers without disabilities. This has raised the demand for mainstream education for children with disabilities.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Country Office Annual Report 2019.

⁷⁸ Second Punjab Education Sector Programme.

⁷⁹ Ibid.



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The National Curriculum Framework sets out guidelines on teaching methodologies that can address the diverse learning needs of students, including children with disabilities.

5

SERVICE DELIVERY

This domain deals with the availability of and access to various services for children with disabilities and initiatives to strengthen different aspects of the education system.

5.1 APPROACHES TO EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

In most parts of the country, children with mild to moderate disabilities are in special schools, while those with severe disabilities are left behind.

Education provisions across the four provinces remain the same. There are provisions for specialized education for children with specific disabilities, such as schools for children with hearing impairments, visual impairments, physical impairments and intellectual disabilities.⁸⁰ Special education schools are commonly located in urban areas, which pose accessibility problems for children with disabilities who live in hard-to-reach areas.

According to a study in 2016, a child with a disability travelled an average distance of 11 kilometers to reach the nearest special school.⁸¹ To encourage more children to go to these schools, support services were provided, such as free transportation, uniform, learning materials, including assistive devices, and allowances.⁸² However, even with government subsidy, enrolment of children with disabilities stayed below 4 per cent.

According to information gathered from the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey, SpEDs' admission policy suggests that special schools only cater to certain groups of children with disabilities, such as those with mild to moderate disability, those with no serious health and behaviour issues and those who are toilet trained.

⁸⁰ 'Balochistan disabled complex for special education, Quetta'.

⁸¹ Hameed, A., and A. Manzoor, 'Defeating Inequalities in School Access: A case of children with disabilities in Pakistan', *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, vol. 16, no. s1, 2016, pp. 345–350, <https://nasenjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1471-3802.12158>.

⁸² Ibid.

Table 6. Approaches to educating children with disabilities

Approach to educating children with disabilities	Description and examples
Special education	<p>Special education is the most dominant approach across the country. There are provisions for specialized education for children with specific disabilities, such as schools for children with hearing impairments, visual impairments, physical impairments and intellectual disabilities.</p> <p>Special education schools are commonly located in urban areas, which pose accessibility problems for children with disabilities who live in hard-to-reach areas.</p> <p>Special Education Departments (SpEDs) manage learning centres for children with disabilities. They also provide transport services and facilitate the distribution of hearing aids and other assistive devices.</p> <p>However, there is a need to expand access to educational opportunities to reach more children as only an estimated 2% of children with disabilities are able to access special education programmes, while another 2% attend mainstream schools, but lack significant support from the school community.</p>
Integration	–
Non-formal education/ alternative learning pathways	<p>Non-formal education is accessed through non-formal basic education, community/home schools, adult/functional literacy centres and vocational/skill training centres. However, children with disabilities do not have access to them at present.</p> <p>Policies such as the Non-Formal Education Policy 2016 also support alternative learning pathways.</p> <p>UNICEF Pakistan supports 550 alternative learning pathway centres across the four provinces. This project has reached 17,500 children, of whom 44% are girls.</p> <p>The Directorate of Literacy and Non-Formal Education Sindh, together with the Sindh Teacher Education Development Authority, developed the Non-formal Education Facilitators' Management Framework.</p> <p>The framework seeks to improve the quality of non-formal education teacher development and strengthen the credibility of the non-formal education sector in Sindh.</p> <p>The teacher standards outlined in the framework include child-centred pedagogy, features of Universal Design for Learning and respect for diversity and equity.</p>

Table 6 (continued)

Approach to educating children with disabilities	Description and examples
Inclusive education (pilots)	SpED and the Punjab Education Foundation piloted the Punjab Inclusive Education Project in public and private schools across Attock, Chakwal, Jehlum, Lahore, Multan, Rawalpindi and Vehari Districts in 2016–2018. The project has since been discontinued.
Vocational training	Programmes for children with visual impairments are being developed by the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority.

Source: Government of Balochistan, Social Welfare, Special Education, Literacy, Non-formal Education & Human Rights Department, ‘Balochistan disabled complex for special education, Quetta’, 2020; UNICEF Pakistan, *Situation Analysis of Children in Pakistan*, United Nations Children’s Fund, 2017; UNESCO Islamabad, Pakistan: UNESCO Country Programming Document 2013–2017, Islamabad, 2013; UNICEF Pakistan, *Country Office Annual Report 2018, Pakistan*, Islamabad, 2018; Government of Sindh, Directorate of Literacy & NFE, School Education Department, NFE Facilitators’ Management Framework, 2016; Government of Punjab, School Education Department, Second Punjab Education Sector Programme (PESP II): Inclusive education strategy 2019–2024, Mott Macdonald Cambridge Education, 2019; Government of Punjab, Punjab Education Sector Plan (2019/20–2023/24), 2019.

Most schools are not prepared to include children with disabilities in mainstream classes.

A survey conducted on 300 teachers across 75 public and private primary schools in Lahore revealed that most schools were not prepared to include children with disabilities due to “the lack of clear admission policies; little knowledge among school administrators regarding how to implement inclusive education, inaccessible school infrastructure; and the absence of professional development opportunities for teachers to implement inclusive education”.⁸³

In Punjab, children’s inability to attend classes due to various reasons commonly lead to repeating a year level or eventual dropout. When children remain absent from school, there is a higher likelihood of dropping out. Furthermore,

as most mainstream schools have little capacity to accommodate children with disabilities, they are referred to specialized schools.⁸⁴ The lack of data and study on learners with cognitive/learning disabilities greatly influence the lack of targeted support for them. These children are in SpED classes known as Centres for Slow Learners.⁸⁵

Non-formal and alternative education pathways cater to children from vulnerable groups, but lack focus on children with disabilities.

Non-formal education is available through varied forms, such as non-formal basic education, community schools, adult and functional literacy centres, and vocational and skills training centres.⁸⁶ They are commonly funded and managed by the federal government and development partners.

⁸³ Singal, ‘Education of Children with Disabilities in India and Pakistan’.

⁸⁴ Second Punjab Education Sector Programme.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ UNESCO Country Programming Document 2013–2017.

Development partners, such as UNICEF Pakistan, initiated alternative education programmes to bring more girls into school. UNICEF supports 550 alternative learning pathway centres in the four provinces, reaching 17,500 children, 44 per cent of whom are girls.⁸⁷

UNICEF has assisted in the development of policies, such as the Non-Formal Education Policy 2016, which support alternative learning pathways.⁸⁸ Non-formal education and alternative education pathways are made available to children from vulnerable groups, but there is little focus on children with disabilities.

Punjab initiates disability-inclusive education with a focus on children with mild disabilities.

Policies and strategies have been created to follow through the Government of Punjab's commitment⁸⁹ to improve equitable access to quality education and strengthen education governance. The Punjab School Roadmap was formulated with the goal of 100 per cent enrolment and literacy.⁹⁰ Since its implementation, 60 per cent of districts in the province have reached 100 per cent enrolment, according to Education Department reports.

Through the Punjab Education Foundation, the government supported low-cost private sector schools to play a pivotal role in the enrolment and retention of students in school.⁹¹

Key features of the education reform in Punjab are:⁹²

- Strengthened information systems and monitoring and implementation mechanisms.
- Capacity building of education administrators and leaders.

- Provision of basic facilities to schools.
- Financial support for female students to curb drop-out rates in low literacy districts.
- Improved teacher professional development.
- Enhanced community participation that includes capacity support to school councils.

SpED and the Punjab Education Foundation piloted PIEP in 955 public and private schools across Attock, Chakwal, Jehlum, Lahore, Multan, Rawalpindi and Vehari Districts.⁹³ The pilot project focused on children with mild disabilities and included teacher training, infrastructure development, provision of teaching and learning tools and devices, and voucher support to schools.

The project met with challenges in data collection, particularly identifying and screening children with disabilities, which led to issues during implementation. By the end of the project, initiatives were not scaled up and the pilot design was discontinued except for the inclusive education session in teacher training under QAED.⁹⁴

The Punjab inclusive education strategy builds on the learnings from PIEP. It focuses on children with mild to moderate disability based on the WG/UNICEF Module of Child Functioning classification of functional disability for the five-year plan.

The strategy uses a whole system approach to disability-inclusive education and focuses on improved access and education quality for all children. It is all-inclusive, which means that aside from disability inclusion, it also strives to reach out to other vulnerable groups in recognition of the various intersecting barriers that children face.⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Country Office Annual Report 2019.

⁸⁸ Country Office Annual Report 2018.

⁸⁹ Mujahid-Mukhtar, *Situation Analysis of the Education Sector*.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Second Punjab Education Sector Programme.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Developments in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) promise inclusion of youth with disabilities.

One of the goals of PESP 2019/20–2023/24 is the provision of equitable and inclusive education, including TVET, giving particular focus to vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities.⁹⁶ The Technical Vocational Education and Training Authority is developing programmes for children with visual impairment, however, a lot of work still needs to be done to improve access of children with disabilities to TVET.⁹⁷ There is currently no clear strategy on disability-inclusive TVET opportunities in Punjab.

5.2 EDUCATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER TRAINING

The National Plan of Action on EFA includes the reform and enhancement of pre-service and in-service training through strengthening teacher capacity for learner-centred pedagogies and principal training.⁹⁸

The EFA plan of the Government of Balochistan involves strengthening the technical capacity of provincial and district education departments in governance to improve the quality of education through a needs assessment to identify key areas of development, including management and administration, data collection and the information system, monitoring and evaluation, assessment and supporting the professional development of teachers. There was no mention of building the capacity of education departments to support inclusive education practices in schools.⁹⁹

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) sets out guidelines on teaching methodologies that can address the diverse learning needs of students, including children with disabilities.¹⁰⁰

NCF includes a section on effective teaching and provides guidelines on diverse methods for teaching and learning that can address the learning needs of all learners, including children with disabilities.

The framework also outlines the expectations for teachers by articulating nine standards. The standards encourage disability-inclusive education through detailing knowledge, attitudes and practices of teachers supporting the learning of children from diverse backgrounds, including children with disabilities:¹⁰¹

- Subject matter knowledge – includes the commitment to “applying multiple ways to impart knowledge to learners” (p. 45); having high expectations for all students; teaching content that is relevant and applicable to the current context of students.
- Human growth and development – understanding the context and background of students; how students learn as influenced by their developmental stage; understanding and knowledge of the needs of students in relation to their “learning styles, disabilities and special need, cultural and socio-emotional differences, special medical, physical or emotional challenges” (p. 45) and how to engage and support them through the teaching and learning process; motivating children to help them learn; appreciating the diversity of students; applying learning theories to respond to the unique learning needs of students.

⁹⁶ Punjab Education Sector Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Second Draft National Plan of Action on Education for All (2001–2015).

⁹⁹ Government of Balochistan, Directorate of Education, Education Department, Education for All Plan: Balochistan 2011–2015, 2011.

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, National Curriculum Framework Pakistan, Islamabad, n.d.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

- Knowledge of Islamic ethical values and life skills – “encourage tolerance and celebration of diversity amongst students” (p. 47).
- Instructional planning and strategies – employing collaboration to promote learning; using assessment and pedagogical research as a means for improving practice; reflective teaching.
- Assessment – using assessment to assess and improve teaching and learning; providing feedback for students to improve learning; providing opportunities for students to use self-assessment methods.
- Learning environment – the use of positive discipline; encouraging participation of students in decision-making in the classroom; encouraging self-regulation; developing a classroom environment where children feel “socially, emotionally and physically safe” (p. 50).
- Effective communication and proficient use of information and communication technology for the teaching and learning process.
- Collaboration and partnerships – engaging parents and the community to improve learning; involve parents through school management committees and parent-teacher councils.
- Continuous professional development and code of conduct – improving teaching and learning through continuous professional development; collaborating with co-teachers to improve teaching and learning; using action research to improve practice.

Pre-service education has been reformed to increase the mandatory number of years for pre-service teachers.

Pre-service teacher education programmes have been streamlined and certificate and diploma

degrees for education have been replaced by a Bachelor of Education degree with a minimum of four years duration to better prepare teachers for teaching in classrooms. The qualifications for hiring teachers have also been adjusted and teachers are required to have four years of pre-service training to be able to teach in basic education.

Although increasing the number of years for pre-service education contributes to teacher competence and, potentially, to disability-inclusive education, there would still need to be research on how the current pre-service programmes facilitate teachers’ capacity for learner-centred pedagogy and supporting the needs of diverse learners, including children with disabilities.¹⁰²

Pre-service programmes in Punjab offer special education units.

Punjab University and the University of Education offer a bachelor’s programme on education and a bachelor’s programme on special education, which has a mandatory unit on inclusive education.¹⁰³

Government units, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and organizations working in inclusive education and disability, develop and deliver in-service training for teachers and education leaders on inclusive education.

National

UNICEF provided technical assistance to teacher training institutes in designing need-based in-service training programmes. This included school-based mentoring packages that support teachers, headteachers and education managers in child-centred pedagogies.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² National Curriculum Framework.

¹⁰³ Second Punjab Education Sector Programme.

¹⁰⁴ Brinkmann, S., *Improving Education Quality in South Asia: A review of UNICEF’s efforts*, United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2018.

Balochistan

Balochistan's EFA plan involves coordination between the Bureau of Curriculum and Provincial Institute of Teacher Education to develop an ECE training programme reflecting key features of the national ECE curriculum to enhance the capacity of katchi (traditional system at pre-primary level) teachers. The plan also includes teacher training on learner-centred pedagogies and leadership training for school improvement.¹⁰⁵ There is no mention of specific training for disability-inclusive education.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

An inclusive education module is integrated into the teacher induction programme, which provides an introduction to the principles of inclusion, facts on disability and mainstreaming in the province and practices that facilitate inclusive education in the classroom.¹⁰⁶

Punjab

QAED, the School Education Department and SpED developed inclusive education training for teacher trainers and teachers. The 90-minute session on inclusive education was developed as part of a pilot project with the assistance of NGOs and organizations that have experience training teachers on inclusive education (e.g., Sightsavers, Rising Sun, Beacon House school system and Bloomfield Hall).¹⁰⁷

QAED has also worked on delivering inclusive education training through video-based teacher professional development material and training for education managers.¹⁰⁸

Organizations working with children with disabilities have also developed training

programmes with teacher guides and materials that teachers can use in their inclusive education practice.¹⁰⁹ Recently, SpED signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the University of Education for teacher training and professional development.

Most recent education plans from the four provinces articulate a commitment to improving disability inclusion through building the capacity of the system to respond to the needs of children with disabilities.

Balochistan

BESP 2020–2025 aims to build the capacity of special educators by conducting an assessment of the expertise within the Directorate of Special Education and identifying capacity building needs required to strengthen special education in the province.¹¹⁰

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The five-year Education Blueprint includes a commitment to a provincial education system that is inclusive. The blueprint articulates that the Elementary and School Education Department will expand its mandate to include education service delivery to children with disabilities.¹¹¹

Punjab

PESP 2019/20–2023/24 articulates the commitment to train teachers on teaching inclusive classrooms. The policy also articulates the review and revision of the standards for teacher education and curriculum and training materials for in-service teachers, although the extent to which disability-inclusive education is integrated into the revisions was not mentioned in the sector plan.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ Education for All Plan: Balochistan 2011–2015.

¹⁰⁶ *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Analysis 2019*.

¹⁰⁷ Second Punjab Education Sector Programme.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020–25.

¹¹¹ Education Blueprint 2018–2023.

¹¹² Punjab Education Sector Plan (2019/20–2023/24).

Sindh

The School Education Sector Plan and Roadmap for Sindh 2019–2024 articulates a plan for SpED to improve disability inclusion in the education system, including organizing awareness-raising workshops for teachers on developing inclusive learning environments. A plan for training teachers and promoting inclusive education will also be developed.

Furthermore, the plan articulates the implementation of a policy on continuous professional development activities for teachers, school leaders and administrators through cluster-based activities.¹¹³

5.3 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Policies and education plans across provinces focus on accessible infrastructure and gender-appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities.

The National Education Policy Framework 2018 prioritizes increasing school participation and decreasing the number of out-of-school children. The framework outlines strategies in bringing more learners to school through infrastructural development:¹¹⁴

1. Maximize existing school infrastructure by consolidating primary, middle and high schools.
2. Introduce afternoon shifts, where feasible, to address school shortage.
3. Fill in missing facilities in existing schools to attract and retain children.
4. Increase access to secondary schools, particularly for girls, either through the

establishment of new schools or school upgradation and the provision of transport in remote areas.

5. Redeploy unused public buildings as education facilities.

A similar focus on improving accessibility of infrastructure, provision of more school buildings and gender-appropriate WASH facilities can be observed in education plans across the country. Some provinces and regions, such as Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan, emphasize the development of child-centred learning environments. This involves envisioning a responsive curriculum,¹¹⁵ as well as explicit action on creating safe and child-friendly spaces for children with disabilities.¹¹⁶

The Minimum Standards for Quality Education incorporate standards for a responsive school learning environment.

Pakistan has created Minimum Standards for Quality Education¹¹⁷ that comprise standards for (1) learners, (2) curriculum, (3) learning materials, (4) teachers, (5) assessment, (6) early learning development standards, and (7) school learning environment.

The Standards for School Learning Environment were linked with the child-friendly school standards and included provisions for basic facilities, school culture, community involvement, learning environment and school leadership.

Initiatives to ensure the safety and security of children in school are present, but implementation is limited and focus on children with disabilities is needed.

Schools have been the target of insurgencies stemming from political, religious and social conflicts. In South Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan

¹¹³ School Education Sector Plan and Roadmap for Sindh (2019–2024).

¹¹⁴ National Education Policy Framework, 2018.

¹¹⁵ Gilgit-Baltistan Education Department, Gilgit-Baltistan Education Strategy 2015–2030, 2014.

¹¹⁶ Punjab Education Sector Plan (2019/20–2023/24).

¹¹⁷ Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Minimum Standards for Quality Education in Pakistan: Attaining standards for improved learning outcomes and school effectiveness, Islamabad, 2016, https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/minimum_standards_for_quality_education_in_pakistan.pdf.

have the highest incidence of attacks, where there were over 1,000 recorded attacks on schools, universities, education staff and students in both countries from 2009 to 2012.¹¹⁸

Abduction of young girls in school and on their way to school to become brides of men in armed groups persist in conflict-afflicted areas.¹¹⁹ Moreover, corporal punishment, bullying, online harassment and sexual abuse have been reported in government, private and religious schools.¹²⁰ As such, safety and security in schools with explicit attention to children with disabilities should be one of the core priorities of the government.

There is no comprehensive legislation in the country that fully addresses school-related gender-based violence.¹²¹ However, there are efforts in some provinces to fill in this gap. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Child Protection and Welfare Act 2010 eliminates corporal punishment and specifies punishment for offences and criminalizes all forms of violence against children.¹²²

5.4 CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

Efforts are being made towards uniformity in curriculum and assessment across the education system.

The National Curriculum Council of Pakistan approved NCF, the policy document that provides guidelines for the school curricula, in 2017. The country has four systems of education that follow different curricula and assessments, namely: public school system, private school system, Deeni Madaris system and non-formal education system.

With the lack of a national curriculum framework to guide these systems previously, the challenge was in providing every child an equal opportunity to education. With the development of NCF, there is now a means to create uniformity in curriculum and assessment across Pakistan's education system. It further includes, in the interweaving goals of the curriculum, the provision for creating equal opportunities for all sections of society, including persons with disabilities.

NCF has specified guidelines for the process of developing curriculum, textbooks and learning materials; learning environment and resources; and assessments and examinations, among others.

The introduction of the Single National Curriculum¹²³ carries a vision of 'One System of Education for All' in the curriculum and medium of instruction and a common platform of assessment to give all children a fair and equal opportunity to receive high-quality education.

The Single National Curriculum was formed in consideration of various areas, including the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, Vision of Quaid and Iqbal, the constitutional framework, targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the emerging trends in teaching, learning and assessment, to name a few.

Information gathered by the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey showed that the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training created a special committee responsible for the inclusion of content focused on children with disabilities. This initiative supports disability inclusion in the Single National Curriculum. Moreover, respect and appreciation for different

¹¹⁸ UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, *Violence against Children in Education Settings in South Asia*, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2016.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 'Single National Curriculum (SNC)', Islamabad, 2020, www.mofept.gov.pk/Detail/YzJiNGVjODgtNjIwOC00YzRiLThmNmUtNjJjYWVwYmJkMWY2, accessed 25 September 2020.

cultures and religions in the local and global context, as well as inclusive education were also part of the key considerations.

The National Education Policy Framework 2018 acknowledges some challenges in Pakistan's education system, such as the extremely inadequate progress in education indicators over the past decade and also the challenge of catering to a diverse student population. It aims to achieve uniformity in education standards to address the expansion in schools and to cater to all diverse groups, especially the most disadvantaged.

Some of the identified activities aimed to address the education priorities presented in the education policy framework include:¹²⁴

1. Curriculum reforms: Review and revision of curriculum frameworks and selection of a common curriculum framework across the country. Set up a National Curriculum Council.
2. Common national teaching and learning standards: Identify common standards applicable across provinces and school systems.
3. Core subjects to be agreed upon across school systems with a common curriculum framework.
4. Agreement on a multilingual policy, with English to be taught as a second language.
5. Strengthen the Inter Board Committee of Chairmen¹²⁵ and adopt common assessment and examination standards.
6. Build the capacity of the National Education Assessment System to learn about student learning outcomes across the various systems.

These initiatives promise equity in education and to provide greater opportunities for children with disabilities to access quality education. The curriculum and assessment framework and education policy, including their implementation, should be reviewed and evaluated based on the CRPD requirements for disability-inclusive education.

5.5 LEARNING MATERIALS

Relevant teaching and learning materials are being developed.

NCF 2017 has provided strategies for the development and production of textbooks and learning resources that are compliant with the curriculum. Chapter 4 of NCF exhaustively discussed the importance of textbooks and supplementary materials for teachers and learners.

The chapter also discussed the basic features of different materials, such as the textbook, teacher's guide, workbook and other supplementary materials and standards for textbook development. The materials, however, need to be flexible for use by children with disabilities and special educational needs. Provisions for assistive devices are also limited, if at all.

The first Braille book corner in Pakistan was introduced.

The first Braille book corner in Pakistan's National Library was inaugurated in 2018, which advocates hailed as important for persons who are blind and visually impaired. The introduction of the Braille book corner was envisioned to facilitate persons who are blind in their learning needs. More than 60 Braille books have been made available, with more books expected to be added soon.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ National Education Policy Framework 2018.

¹²⁵ The Inter Board Committee of Chairmen was set up at federal level in 1972 with the responsibilities to exchange information among education boards on all aspects of intermediate and secondary education to achieve a fair measure of uniformity in academic evaluation and curricular standards and to promote curricular and extra-curricular activities on an Inter-board basis. For more information: <https://ibcc.edu.pk/about-ibcc>.

¹²⁶ 'Pakistan's first Braille book corner opens', *Express Tribune*, 12 January 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1606496/pakistans-first-braille-book-corner-opens>.

5.6 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS

There is limited evidence of the participation of children with disabilities in ECE.

A situation analysis of the education sector showed generally higher gross ECE enrolment in rural areas than in urban areas, as the population is denser in rural regions, except for Punjab and the Islamabad Capital Territory.¹²⁷ While there are several ECE classes available across the country, there are limited data showing the extent of participation of children with disabilities in pre-primary education.

The Government of Sindh developed the ECCE Standards for Sindh in 2017, with support from UNICEF, to help address the challenges in access to and quality of care and education services for pre-primary school-aged children (aged 3–5 years).¹²⁸

The standards are founded on NEP 2009, National Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan 2009 and Early Learning & Development Standards in Pakistan 2010, among others. The ECCE Standards explicitly state that the ECCE curriculum shall promote inclusive education and note that children with 'minor disabilities' are to be prioritized for admission into preschools.

The ECCE Standards include features of child-centred pedagogy and encourage teachers to respond to diversity in the classroom, taking into consideration the individual learning style and background context of all their students. Furthermore, they promote the use of Universal Design for Learning strategies, such as the application of multiple ways of presenting information to learners and different assessment

methods to measure learning to improve teaching and learning processes.¹²⁹

The ECCE Standards also contain a section on standards for teachers, in which teachers are enjoined to commit to values and beliefs that will help in teaching all children effectively. Some of these standards nurture inclusive values and practices, such as believing that all children can learn and be successful; all children bring skills and strengths; having respect for diversity and tolerance and nurturing the same in all learners; and reflecting to improve teaching and learning processes.¹³⁰

In Punjab, the Special Education Policy articulates a focus on improving SpED and rehabilitative services.

SpED is responsible for the psychological and rehabilitative services for children with disabilities. The Punjab Special Education Policy 2020 articulates that SpED aims include building the capacity of teachers, education staff and parents in educating and caring for children with disabilities.¹³¹ Part of this is raising awareness of rehabilitative services and SpED services in the province. Community-based programmes are to be developed to identify children with disabilities and provide initial intervention and immediate support services.

Higher education institutes provide support services to students with disabilities.

The HEC policy for students with disabilities in higher education institutions enumerates services due to students with disabilities. They include, among others, provision of full tuition fee subsidy, discounted miscellaneous fees, provision of assistive devices and other learning materials in accessible formats, medical assistance and the building of accessible facilities/infrastructure.¹³²

¹²⁷ Mujahid-Mukhtar, *Situation Analysis of the Education Sector*.

¹²⁸ Government of Sindh, School Education Department, Early Childhood Care and Education Standards for Sindh, 2017.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Government of Punjab, Special Education Department, Punjab Special Education Policy 2020, 2020.

¹³² Policy for Students with Disabilities at Higher Education Institutions.

Table 7. Available support services

Support service	Examples
Early childhood development and early childhood care and education (ECCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector pre-primary education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Katchi, or pre-primary schooling, is a traditional system for children aged 4–5 years. The quality of facilities and education in traditional katchis is seen as low, where children who are economically marginalized go. The set-up in the traditional katchi is multi-grade and the mother tongue or Urdu is used in teaching, but the English alphabet and numbers are also taught. o Improved katchi, or early childhood education (ECE), has better and well-supported facilities and teaching staff. Teachers have undergone appropriate training and there are provisions for proper teaching classrooms and learning materials. However, improved katchis are only available in less than 1% of public primary schools. • Private sector pre-primary education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Urban private schools provide nursery, kindergarten or Montessori style education. Like the improved katchis, these classes are well supported and have age-appropriate learning materials facilities and well-trained teachers. o Deeni madrassahs are religious schools catering to pre-primary school-aged children. These schools focus more on values and Islamic teachings. o While there are various ECE centres around the country, not all of them have enough developmental appropriate facilities and learning materials. Private ECEs in urban areas, such as Montessori and kindergarten sections, have well-equipped play and learning facilities. • ECCE Standards for Sindh were developed in 2017, based on national standards and policies, to improve access to and quality of ECCE services for children aged 3–5 years.
Therapy interventions and family support	<p>The Punjab Special Education Policy 2020 states that the Special Education Department (SpED) is responsible for providing training and capacity building for teachers, education staff and parents, including building awareness of services available for children with disabilities.</p> <p>Psychological and rehabilitative services of children with disabilities are under the purview of SpED.</p>
Financial support	<p>SpED provides accessible transportation and free assistive devices.</p> <p>There are full tuition fee subsidies and discounted miscellaneous fees for students with disabilities in higher education institutions.</p>

Source: Government of Balochistan, Directorate of Education, Education Department, Education for All Plan: Balochistan 2011–2015, 2011; Mujahid-Mukhtar, E., *Situation Analysis of the Education Sector*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, n.d.; Government of Sindh, School Education Department, Early Childhood Care and Education Standards for Sindh, 2017; Government of Punjab, Special Education Department, Punjab Special Education Policy 2020, 2020; UNICEF Pakistan, *Situation Analysis of Children in Pakistan*, United Nations Children’s Fund, Islamabad, 2017; Higher Education Commission, Policy for Students with Disabilities at Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan, 2019.



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The Minimum Standards for Quality Education encourage disability-inclusive education by emphasizing learner-centred approaches, providing guidelines for teachers to teach all children and encouraging the development of inclusive learning environments.

6

MEASURING AND MONITORING QUALITY

This domain includes measures to ensure the quality of education and support services for children with disabilities.

6.1 STANDARDS AND INDICATORS FOR INCLUSION

Minimum standards for quality education have been developed by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training in partnership with the National Curriculum Council.

The Minimum Standards for Quality Education provide standards for learners, teachers, curriculum and textbooks, school environment

and assessment. The standards are designed for provinces to decide the extent of achievement they expect within their respective provinces.

The standards encourage disability-inclusive education by emphasizing learner-centred approaches, providing guidelines for teachers to teach all children and encouraging the development of inclusive learning environments. They also contain a discussion on child-friendly schools, which emphasizes inclusive education and ensuring that all children, including children with disabilities, have access to quality education.¹³³

¹³³ Minimum Standards for Quality Education, 2016.

6.2 MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Mechanisms for monitoring and quality assurance need further review.

There is little evidence in the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey pointing to the existence of a systematic monitoring and quality assurance mechanism for disability-inclusive education.

Data on children with disabilities are available in various government units. For example, disability certificates are issued by the Social

Welfare Department. The National Database and Registration Authority also issues national identity cards.

Each of the provinces operates its respective EMIS, however, data collected are limited to enrolment and types of disability. It would be critical to review how information on children with disabilities is collected, shared, fed into various systems, analysed and utilized. Furthermore, the extent to which the Minimum Standards for Quality Education are used in monitoring and evaluation at the school, provincial and national levels is worth looking at.



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There is commitment to providing equitable quality education for girls, but gender disparity in access to education remains an issue in Pakistan.

7

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

7.1 GENDER

There is commitment to providing equitable quality education for girls, but gender disparity in access to education remains an issue in Pakistan.

The constitution, plans, policies and international obligations mandate the government to provide equitable quality education to young girls and women in Pakistan. The country's commitment to education for all is evident in its legislation as the inclusion of girls and women in policy, planning, programming of services and coordination mechanisms of matters that affect them can be consistently seen.

While various initiatives promote gender inclusion, a focus on targeting girls with disabilities is lacking. On the whole, there are more schools for boys than there are for girls.¹³⁴ The literacy rate among females aged 15–24 years was only 46.5 per cent compared to that of males at 69.3 per cent in 2019.¹³⁵

Development partners have taken initiatives to increase gender equity in education and the community.

- UNICEF organized community mobilizations, bringing around 900,000 out-of-school girls into primary school in 2018.¹³⁶
- Through UNICEF's advocacy efforts, the provincial governments of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh committed to initiating middle school alternative learning programmes focused on bringing more girls back to school.¹³⁷
- A gender-sensitive parenting package was developed, with support and technical inputs from UNICEF, to promote good practices in family care and engage more fathers in responsive caregiving.¹³⁸
- UNICEF supported gender-responsive policies and programming, such as the Sindh Education Sector Plan and the national action plan for menstrual hygiene management.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Human Rights Watch, ' "Shall I Feed My Daughter, or Educate Her?" Barriers to Girls' Education in Pakistan', 12 November 2018, www.hrw.org/report/2018/11/12/shall-i-feed-my-daughter-or-educate-her/barriers-girls-education-pakistan.

¹³⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Pakistan', 2021, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/pk>.

¹³⁶ *Country Office Annual Report 2018*.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Country Office Annual Report 2019*.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

- UNESCO developed a booklet of guidelines for mainstreaming gender in literacy materials for educators, policymakers, curriculum writers, textbook developers and other education actors. The guidebook seeks to provide writers and developers of literacy materials with gender mainstreaming principles and build awareness on the need for gender-sensitive literacy materials.¹⁴⁰

Efforts are being made to promote positive menstrual health and hygiene management.

UNICEF Pakistan's #NoChutti campaign seeks to empower young girls and women during their menstrual period and promote positive menstrual hygiene. 'No chutti' means 'no break' in Urdu. The social media campaign has reportedly reached over 1 million youth and has gained support from several personalities and religious leaders.

UNICEF and the Women Empower Group received the support of a group of prayer leaders. The Council of Islamic Ideology published a statement expressing a positive religious standpoint on menstrual hygiene management.¹⁴¹ The initiative has an undeniable impact on many issues related to girls and women, such as child rights, child protection, women's health and empowerment and gender equity. However, data on its impact on girls with disabilities are lacking.

7.2 HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

Strategies and interventions to meet the challenges to education during the COVID-19 pandemic were identified and expected to deliver learning opportunities to all children, including children with disabilities and special educational needs.

Schools in Pakistan have reopened in phases from 15 September 2020, but over 30 institutions had closed again for not complying with COVID-19 guidelines.¹⁴² This and other challenges were identified in the National Education Response and Resilience Plan (K-12) for COVID-19. The document identified three priority areas: (1) continuation of learning, (2) system strengthening and resilience, and (3) addressing health, hygiene and safety.

To ensure continuity of learning, access to technology was given focus where self-learning and guided learning were identified to facilitate learning in different areas. The proposed strategies and interventions are:¹⁴³

1. Develop and implement a distance and blended learning competency standards and assessment framework.
2. Conduct a rapid gap analysis of content for different platforms and modalities.
3. Create and develop content for different platforms and modalities.
4. Ensure distribution and dissemination of digital and non-digital learning content.
5. Develop and institute regular follow-ups and monitoring system for different learning modalities.
6. Strengthen and support the role of teachers, headteachers and schools.

These interventions are expected to deliver content and learning opportunities to all children, including children with disabilities and special educational needs. A wide array of technology and interventions were proposed, yet another pressing concern is the lack of internet infrastructure in different areas and provinces to support the digital platform.

¹⁴⁰ UNESCO Islamabad, Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender in Literacy Materials, Islamabad, 2010.

¹⁴¹ UNICEF Country Office Annual Report 2018.

¹⁴² Menon, S., 'Coronavirus: How the lockdown has changed schooling in South Asia', BBC, 21 September 2020, www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-54009306.

¹⁴³ Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Pakistan National Education Response and Resilience for COVID 19, Islamabad, 2020, <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/pakistan-national-education-response-and-resilience-plan-k-12-covid-19-6937>.



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Ensure investments are directed towards inclusive approaches to educating children with disabilities.

8

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

1. Strengthen coordination mechanisms.

Review and strengthen coordination among ministries and across governance levels. The federal government has paved the way for new coordination mechanisms to be established. In a setting such as Pakistan where different departments (education/welfare) are responsible for the education of children with disabilities, coordination and sharing of expertise is especially crucial.

2. Adopt the Washington Group of questions in all data collection initiatives.

Data on barriers children experience in learning, facilitating factors to learning, as well as the progress and achievement of children with disabilities, need to be integrated into data collection systems for more responsive disability-inclusive programming and policymaking.

Capacitate schools in the identification and measurement of disability.

3. Ensure investments are directed towards inclusive approaches to educating children with disabilities.

4. Strengthen school-based professional development support on disability-inclusive education.

Strengthen support for teachers and school leaders on disability-inclusive education by developing policies and structures for continuous professional development at the school level. Incentivize school-based professional development and sharing knowledge between teachers and special educators.

5. Review pre-service and in-service teacher education and training.

Review the pre-service teacher education curriculum and in-service teacher training programmes to include competencies key to

teaching across all subjects and programmes in diverse environments in alignment with the social model of disability. Emphasize the Universal Design for Learning in all teacher development initiatives.

6. Develop laws and processes to address school-based violence.

Develop national legislation and school-level processes that comprehensively address prevention of and intervention and response to school-based violence against children with disabilities.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

1. Support the government in strengthening early childhood development programmes.

Support the government in strengthening ECD programmes and ensure children with disabilities are targeted.

2. Facilitate partnerships and coordination.

Facilitate the strengthening of partnerships and multisectoral coordination among ministries.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Assess the implementation of laws and policies on disability-inclusive education.

Build an evidence base for what works and what can be scaled up. Conduct a comprehensive mapping of legislation and identify provisions that can perpetuate the exclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education.

2. Conduct a review of financing and funding mechanisms.

3. Assess how the Minimum Standards for Quality Education are being used in schools.

Assess the extent of their integration into school processes and impact on improving access to high-quality education for all learners, including children with disabilities.

4. Assess the monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Assess how data are being used to influence the planning of programmes and policy development for disability-inclusive education.



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Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Pakistan



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