

OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN SINDH: LOOKING AT ACCESS & EQUITY

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This paper focuses on the state of out of school children, specifically in the Sindh province while using ASER 2011 data. Every third child in Sindh is out of school. Addressing educational catastrophe in Pakistan is imperative since education is a fundamental human right. Denying access to education deprives a nation from human capital thus jeopardising development efforts.

INTRODUCTION: Sixty one million children were globally out of school in 2010¹, out of this sixty one million, sixteen million are found in South and West Asia making the region second large habitat for out of school children after Sub Saharan Africa. Within South Asia region, Pakistan has the highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC). In absolute terms 7.3 million children are OOS presenting 34 percent of the country's primary school-age population. In the age cohort of 7-16 years, one in every four children is OOSC in Pakistan.² In terms of retention only 59 percent of primary school students pass out without repeating a class or being dropped out.

OOSC BY TYPE: UN divides OOSC into three distinct categories. First, children who have attended school in the past but are no longer in school. Second, children who are not in school but will enter school in the future and third, children who will never attend school³.

ASER SURVEY & OOSC: Annual Status of Education Report (2011) is a citizen led survey of households that measures learning levels of various age cohorts. The report speaks of bleak differences across various divides for example

rural-urban, public-private and male-female education across districts in Pakistan. ASER measured OOSC as children who are out of school either because they were never enrolled in any formal educational institution or dropped out of school. ASER 2011 survey collected information on 143,826 children from across 85 districts of the country. In the 6-16 years age group 29.5 percent children were found to be OOSC and among these, 24.4 percent were never enrolled and 5.1 percent were dropped out students.

Table 1 Children in Different Types of Schools (%)

Age Group	Govt	Pvt	Madr assah	Other	OOSC		Total
					Never Enrolled	Drop Out	
6-10	67.5	7.2	0.5	0.3	23.1	1.5	100
11-13	61.6	6.2	0.6	0.3	24	7.4	100
14-16	49.8	4.3	0.4	0.1	29.8	15.6	100
6-16	63.3	6.5	0.5	0.3	24.4	5.1	100

Source ASER 2011

Table 1 provides a glimpse of school enrolment in various types of schools and OOSC for different age groups. 24.6 percent in 6-10 age groups comprise of OOSC, this number for 11-13 and 14-16 age cohorts is 31.4 and 45.4 respectively and hence represent an increasing trend for OOSC in Sindh province.

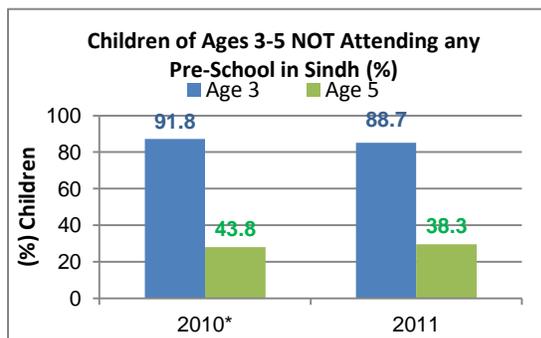
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¹ UNESCO Institute of Statistics

² Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2007 (PDH)

³ United Nations Fact Sheet, June 2011

OOSC and Early Child Hood Education: Early child hood education or pre-primary education as according to UNESCO standards should at least start by 3 years of children age so as to introduce them to the school-type environment and to provide a bridge between school and home. ASER observed 88.3 percent of pre primary age group children (3-5 years according to ASER standards) not attending any preschool in 2011.



SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS, GENDER GAP, RURAL URBAN DEVIDE, SCHOOL

INFRASTRUCTURE and OOSC: Challenges to education are linked to many socio economic factors including income, poverty and revelation of a child to manual labor, cultural conflicts, natural disasters, location, migration and displacement, disability, gender, ethnicity, ge of instruction, religion and caste. hese disparities often intersect with each er, resulting in mutually reinforcing patterns disadvantage that erect barriers to schooling and erode educational opportunities.

Sindh is Pakistan’s second largest province, both with respect to population and economic output since it has highest output per capita when compared with other provinces. Notwithstanding its strong relative economic position and growth performance, Sindh performed poorly across a range of socioeconomic indicators including schooling. Fewer than half the children of province’s primary school-age population are enrolled in

schools.⁴ OOSC patterns for Sindh as in ASER presents stark differences in male-female, inter-regional and rural-urban divides. Education for All means educating and treating both sexes equally through a process whereby gender gap is narrowed.⁵ Gender equality in the province however remains elusive: reasons for which can be tracked via insecure school environment and inadequate sanitation that disproportionately affect girls’ self esteem, their participation and school retention. ASER addresses these *resource gaps*, as for example only 32.8 percent of public schools have useable toilet facility while 47.8 percent schools have useable water and 71.6 percent have a boundary wall. Useable toilets are essentials specifically when a child reaches puberty. 57 percent girls are excluded from primary education whereas 64 percent boys got enrolled. 64 percent of those who enroll in primary education completes with a gender gap of 14 percent. Gender differences are apparent in learning levels as well, 13.5 percent girls can read at least an English word whereas this number is 21.1 for boys, 21 percent boys whereas 14 percent girls can do math sums and subtraction.

94 percent of grade III students in Sindh are not able to read a sentence in English. ASER 2011

PROVINCIAL COMPARISON OF OOSC:

ASER 2011 conducted a survey in 17 rural and one urban district in Sindh. The province stands out when it comes to provincial comparison of OOSC among other provinces of Pakistan. 29.5 percent of province’s school going population is out of school, this number is larger than the one shown by tribal areas of the country. Table 2 provides a comparison of OOSC in several provinces of Pakistan.

⁴ web.worldbank.org

⁵ World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education. Report Published by UNESCO

Province	OOSC (%)	Rank
ICT	3.9	1
AJK	10.3	2
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	14.6	3
Punjab	16.1	4
Gilgit-Baltistan	22.6	5
Balochistan	23.6	6
FATA	25.3	7
Sindh	29.5	8

DISTRICT COMPARISON OF OOSC: Karachi has the highest literacy rate for mothers as 85 percent of mothers were found to be literate and only 5 percent students did not attend school in 2011. This number is greater when compared to other urban districts of Lahore and Peshawar. Kashmore and Thatha, the two rural

districts on the other hand present the highest number of OOSC when compared with other rural districts of the province. 55.7% of their

85 percent mothers in Karachi are literate and only 5 percent students did not attend school. ASER2011

school going population never enrolled in school besides the two districts had alarming trends of school dropouts, 73.7 and 61.5 percent respectively.

REASONS FOR EDUCATION TO BE ON THE FOREFRONT:

This section provides the reasoning why OOSC is a matter of attention for government of Pakistan and calls for immediate attention of respective authorities.

1. Children who miss out on learning remain vulnerable to future disasters, education therefore is important since it equips children with knowledge, skills and innovative techniques that can be incorporated as a key strategy in coping with the challenges arising in one's life.
2. Education is a growth escalator, poverty & inequality reducer, creates incentives, and

has far reaching impact on the mindsets of people.

3. Education has effects far beyond the classroom as it equip citizens with participation in society, and through education, societies foster values and spread ideas.
4. Promotes gender equality in educational attainments, decision making within society and equips them with skills for better jobs.
5. Maternal education improves education levels attained by their children, affects positively completion, success rate and child's own awareness on health.

CONCLUSION: Pakistan's education sector where more than 150,000 public institutions serving over 21 million students alongside a colossal private sector which is facilitating another 12 million, presents formidable challenges. Education system is divided on lines of geography, class, income, wealth, medium of instruction, cost, curricula, and gender (Bari & Sultana, 2011). These differences manifest themselves in differentials such as access, dropouts and in the quality of education that is being imparted. In Sindh particularly, issues that hampered improvement of education sector and affected service delivery can be termed as weak education sector management, low quality of teaching and learning, constraints on improving current strategies, limited, or when it comes to rural areas, no access to quality education and stark differences in the education that is being provided by public and private schools.

Children are missing out on school due to expenses, such as fees, transportation and uniforms etc.⁶ The global debate on free and

⁶ Education First, An Initiative by UN Secretary General, Upcoming Conference

compulsory education is considerably heard in the country as inclusion of article-25 A in the 18th constitutional amendment now guarantees free and compulsory education to all the children of age 5-16. Sindh government also adopted a medium-term Sindh Education Sector Reform Program (SERP). This involves new teacher recruitment policy, establishing grants, introducing incentive programs, and providing free textbooks to all public school students as well as stipends to girl students those who enroll in class six to ten.⁷ Government of Sindh is promoting private schooling by establishing 1000 schools in several districts of Sindh. SEF also provide school support fund, teacher training, resource materials for enrichment of curriculum etc. to the government schools to combat educational crisis in the province. Education is no more an unspeakable word in the policy circles of Pakistan. The ideological debate on equity and access to education in civil society and the government has started playing a vital role. Within Pakistan ASER made data at the household level available, allowing researchers to study changes in educational quality, spread, access and equity. All that needs to be done is to use information on education standards both at national and international levels systematically so as to align it with the needs of the nation. Free and compulsory education for all children needs to be on the top of agenda so as the wider development targets can be reached.

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⁷ World Bank, Sindh Education Sector Development Policy Credit