



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

WHY PAKISTAN NEEDS A LITERACY MOVEMENT?



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WHY
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LITERACY
MOVEMENT?



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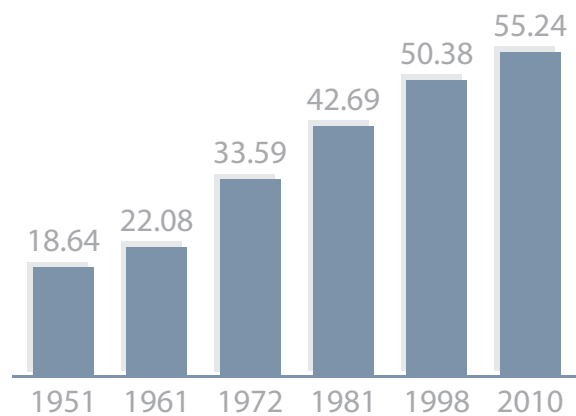
Pakistan's Literacy Deficit



Literacy and survival

The importance of literacy in the world of today can hardly be overemphasized where new technologies are emerging from nowhere to push the older ones into obsolescence. Job markets are in constant flux; demand for traditional skills long cherished is vanishing overnight, and new, unheard of skills are assuming centre stage. To survive in and stay abreast of such a world, individuals and nations are alike hard pressed to stay on a steep learning curve – and literacy is basic to all learning.

An illiteracy explosion

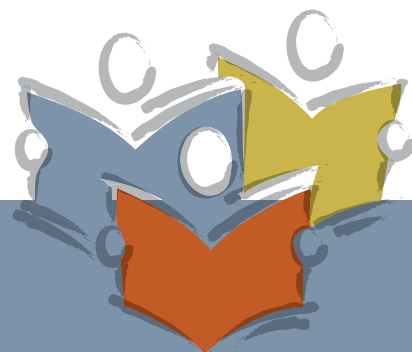


■ Illiterate Population (10+, millions)

Pakistan came into being in 1947 amid much revolutionary fervour and dreams of a bright future. Four years later in 1951, the fledgling country was having a literacy rate of 17.9 per cent – which meant 18.64 million citizens were illiterate.

One would expect this number of illiterates to go down with the passage of time. On the contrary, the illiterate population of the country has swollen to the extent that in 1998, over 50 million Pakistanis were illiterate. It is feared that number of illiterates is still growing in Pakistan.

This doubling of Pakistan's illiterate population has been brought about by the state's failure to provide basic education to all children.



¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Pakistan#cite_ref-unesdoc.unesco.org_21-0

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Pakistan

³ EFA Adult Literacy Table

The anatomy of the tragedy

There are a few clearly discernable patterns to this deprivation – for illiteracy is nothing but: more women are illiterate than men; more rural than urban citizens cannot read and write; and greater proportions of tribal and agrarian communities and ethnic minorities are illiterate.

Very many reasons

How did this come about? What went wrong with a nation founded on the promise of progress and opportunity for every individual, class, and community? There are various diagnoses – ranging from lack of policy emphasis on education to resource constraints to top-heavy government to lopsided spending priorities to the population explosion, among others.

For instance, budget allocations for literacy and NFBE have always been low – even compared to poorer nations – and uncertain. Inconsistencies in literacy policies have downgraded literacy efforts and undermined literacy practitioners.



Human Development Index

Rank	Country
133	 Cape Verde
134	 India
135	 Ghana
136	 Equatorial Guinea
137	 Congo
138	 Lao People's Democratic Republic
139	 Cambodia
140	 Swaziland
141	 Bhutan
142	 Solomon Islands
143	 Kenya
144	 São Tomé and Príncipe

145 Pakistan

146	 Bangladesh
147	 Timor-Leste
148	 Angola
149	 Myanmar
150	 Cameroon
151	 Madagascar
152	 Tanzania (United Republic of)
153	 Papua New Guinea
154	 Yemen
155	 Senegal
156	 Nigeria

A shattered dream

Probably all of these diagnoses merit serious consideration. However, the root cause is clearly discernable in hindsight: a failure to recognize the right to education and the importance of educating the masses.

The outcome, inevitably, has been a shattered dream. With a reported literacy rate of 56% in 2010 (PSLM 2010-11), Pakistan is among the lowest literate nations of the world. According to the UNDP's International Human Development Indicators database, Pakistan ranks 130 among 141 reporting countries and territories in terms of adult literacy (both sexes, 15 years and older).

From custom index based on one indicator (adult literacy rate, both sexes); source: DIY HDI: Build Your Own Index: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/build/>

⁴ Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Survey 2010-11, Statistics Division, Govt. of Pakistan, Islamabad.



Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE)



Literacy

Road to personal and social development

Adult literacy programmes are meant for illiterate adults, and are primarily limited to training in basic skills of Reading, Writing and Numeracy. These programmes also promote personal development at the individual level, as well as bringing about empowerment and social change.

Convenient Timings and Access

Timings of adult literacy programmes are often flexible and tailored to the convenience of adult learners. This allows working adults including women to enrol without loss of income or conflict with their timetable to complete routine and essential house chores. Secondly, literacy classes are organized near their homes or work places, making it easier for them to attend.



NFBE (Non-Formal Basic Education)

Targets out-of-school children and youth

NFBE – when considered separately from adult literacy education – targets those unfortunate children and youth who have either no access to formal primary schools, or have missed the chance to enrol at the appropriate time. NFBE Centres cater to the learning needs of out of school children and youth through cost effective and flexible approaches. Instead of waiting for establishment of a formal primary school and construction of a proper building, classes are organized in a place provided by the local community, and a locally available educated person is assigned the responsibility of teaching. Curriculum is equivalent to primary level and those who complete the course are mainstreamed or allowed to enrol at Elementary or Middle level. In fact, it is an alternate form of schooling, and offers a second chance to those who missed to enrol or dropped out earlier. In many instances learners are able to complete 5 year primary school curriculum in a reduced period of 3 years.

Flexible and cost effective

The content and timing of a NFBE programme can be adjusted to the needs of learners. It is particularly useful for a country like Pakistan where there is a pressing need to quickly expand basic education coverage.

A ramp to formal education

The idea of this kind of education programming is to provide accelerated instructions to the target individuals in the basics of education so that they can join the formal education system at the high school or higher level.

On at par with formal schools

Ideally, beneficiaries or graduates of a NFBE programme are considered equivalent to formal primary level and are allowed to enrol at Elementary School (Grade VI) to mainstream and continue their education.



Benefits of Literacy

Benefits of literacy are far reaching. There are human and cultural benefits, there are social and political benefits, and then there are economic benefits. Indeed, in modern societies, literacy skills are seen as 'fundamental to informed decision-making, personal empowerment, active and passive participation in local and global social community' (Literacy for Life: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006, p. 137).

Key human benefits of literacy are higher self-esteem, greater self-confidence, and empowerment. Political benefits include higher political participation and greater support for democracy.

In terms of cultural benefits, literacy can help challenge attitudes and behaviour patterns. This can help bring about cultural transformation through promotion of values such as equity, inclusion, and respect for cultural diversity, peace, and active democracy.

Among social benefits of literacy are better health outcomes, improved reproductive behaviour, advancement of education, and promotion of gender equality. Finally, literacy is a booster of economic growth. Unfortunately, just like benefits of literacy, costs of illiteracy touch every facet of individual, family, community, and national life.





Costs of Illiteracy



A terrible toll

This is an unenviable situation to say the least. The deplorably low literacy rate has taken a terrible toll on the nation's performance in every sphere of life.

Citizens are the nation

The wealth and wellbeing of a nation is inevitably the sum of its citizen's wealth and wellbeing. Illiterate individuals are ill equipped to realize their own true potential or to fend for their dependents. Their inability to make progress in life translates into the nation's inability to advance.

A vicious cycle

This gives rise to a vicious cycle in which illiterate adults live in poverty and fail to educate their children, condemning them to life of want and poverty. In turn, these children grow to become illiterate adults. More numerous than the previous generation, they are trapped in poverty; and like their parents, they fail to educate their children....

Lagging behind neighbours

With a substantial part of the country's population locked in this vicious cycle, Pakistan inevitably suffers in terms of economic development; small wonder we are falling behind our neighbours in terms of GDP growth just as we are lagging in terms of literacy.

Democracy undermined

However, this is not the worst consequence of high illiteracy. Illiteracy undermines the very foundations of our democracy. Illiterate citizens inevitably lack in awareness and reasoning skills. How can we expect a voter to make an informed decision when he/she is unable to even read a newspaper? Illiterate voters are

easy to be misled. Small wonder so many Pakistanis either abstain or take the wrong side in politically defining moments. The root cause for frequent intervals of dictatorship and political instability in the country is the illiteracy of 70% voters living in rural areas, who cannot read newspapers and hence can easily be exploited or misguided. These illiterate masses remain indifferent to what is happening at national or provincial level. They are unable to know how their elected representatives are performing in the parliament, or how they are switching over their loyalties for narrow or personal gains, ignoring larger developmental interests of the nation.

Social stability jeopardized

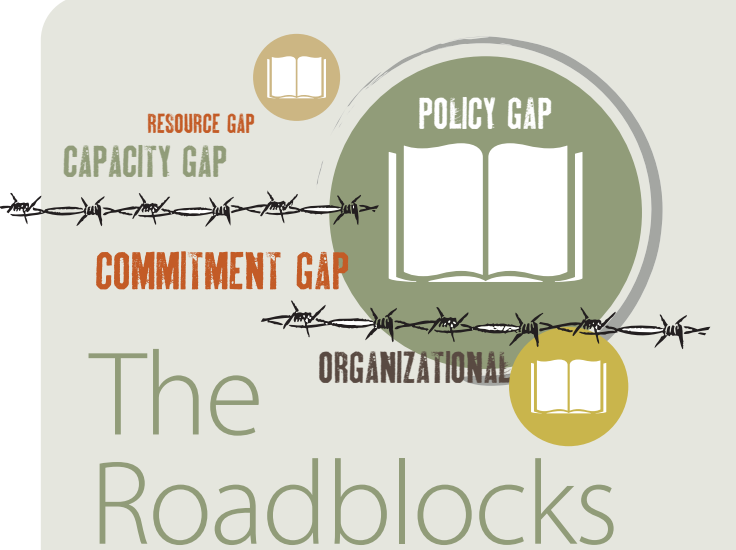
A cursory look at recent history reveals that a burgeoning population unequipped for the job market is the surest recipe for social upheaval. An illiterate population is by definition unequipped for the modern job market – and increasingly so. Fighting illiteracy is therefore Pakistan's only option to ensure social stability.

National security imperilled

The story does not end there. Rampant illiteracy has grave implications for Pakistan's national security. A largely illiterate population is easy prey to nefarious propaganda – easily misguided, easily divided, easily radicalized.

A grim future

Today, new technologies are transforming the world around us at an ever-increasing pace. Mastery of these emerging technologies requires high levels of education. In these circumstances, the impact of illiteracy on the performance of a nation is sure to grow with time. In sum, in a world characterized by invention and innovation, the arts of war and peace are getting increasingly complex. Pakistan's literacy deficit thus has grave implications for Pakistan's national power – both hard and soft. Not spending enough on Adult Literacy and NFBE now will certainly cost the nation much more in the future – in terms of economic loss, social problems and political instability.



The Roadblocks

Here are some of the more prominent roadblocks in the way of promoting literacy in Pakistan.

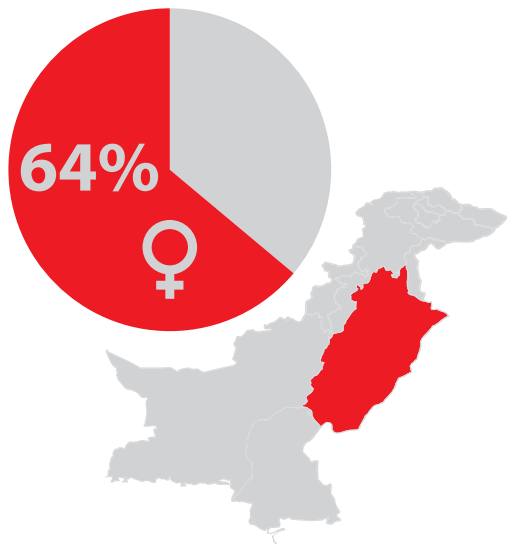
- 1 Commitment Gap** (Lack of political will and leadership)
Funds are sanctioned but politicians do not take interest and provide leadership; they do not push agenda of social change through literacy.
- 2 Policy Gap** (Lack of a clear and strong policy on Literacy and NFBE)
Lack of administrative will; open and disguised opposition to Literacy & NFBE by the traditional planners.
- 3 Organizational Gap**
Absence of permanent organizational structure for Literacy and NFBE in various provinces; leads to coordination gap as well.
- 4 Resource Gap**
Meagre and inconsistent financial assistance; leads to uncertainty about funding
- 5 Capacity Gap**
There are 'islands of excellence' but on the whole, the sub sector of Literacy and NFBE is marred by weak professional base, missing continuity of experience, and paucity of independent research and evaluation studies.



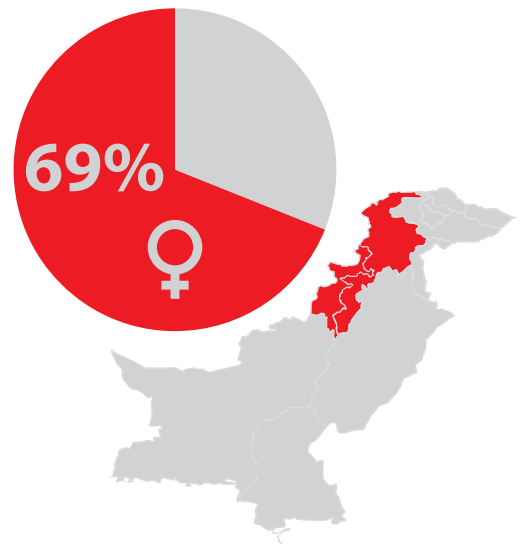
Report Card: Literacy in Pakistan

SOURCE:PSLM (2010-11)

54% women can not read and write



64% rural women in **Punjab** are illiterate



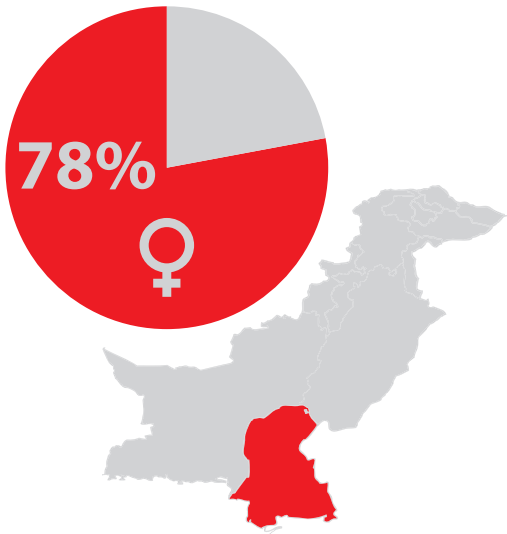
69% rural women in **KPK** are illiterate

Glaring Disparities

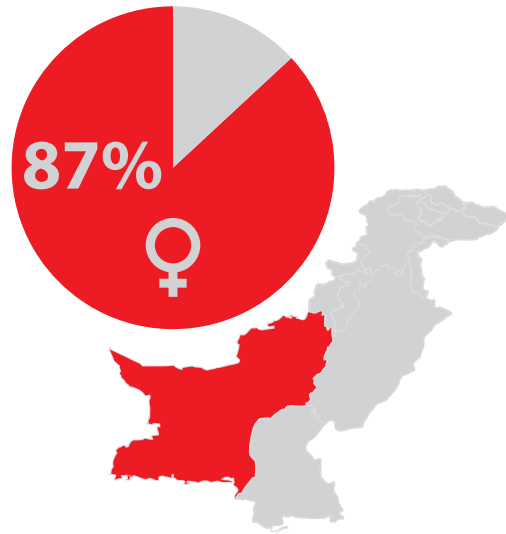
♂ **82%** literacy among **males** in Urban Sindh

vs

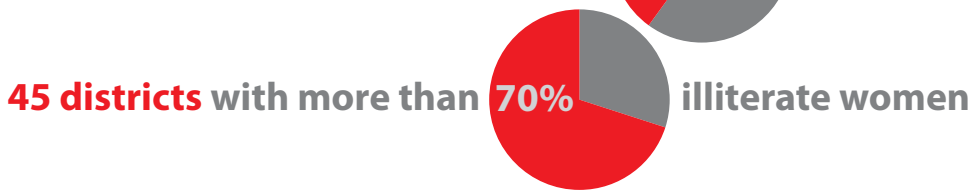
♀ **13%** literacy among **females** in Rural Balochistan



78% rural women in **Sindh** can not read and write



87% rural women in **Balochistan** are illiterate





The Remedies



A temptation to avoid

One is tempted to pin all hopes for correcting this situation on adequate provisions for universal primary education. The argument would go like this: make sure every child is schooled and in time, every Pakistani will be literate. However, we already know that as of 2011, some seven million Pakistani children of school-going age have no access to formal education. Here, are we not totally ignoring the right of 55 million illiterate Pakistanis to basic education?

A waiting game?

By the time we can build adequate primary school capacity, many of them would be beyond primary school age; and then there are the other millions who are already beyond that age – including adults and adolescents. Should we wait for them to live out their lives in illiteracy and deprivation associated with it?

Reasons of honour

There are several arguments against this approach. First and foremost, education is a basic human right to which Pakistan is committed under multiple international covenants. This calls for a proactive approach to literacy programming.

On the other hand, would it be honourable for Pakistan to deny this basic human right to millions of its citizens by choosing inaction? Given that Pakistanis are a nation of bright and dynamic people and have aspiration to progress, the policymakers and donors must act and act swiftly.

Too many consequences, and too severe

The consequences of carrying a large illiterate population – a few of which have been referenced above – are too many and too severe for Pakistan to suffer any longer. The sooner Pakistan overcomes illiteracy, the better.

The toolbox of transformation

This is where Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) and Adult Literacy come in – allowing nations in situations like Pakistan's to quickly tackle the challenges of illiterate adults and out of school children and youth.



The Framework for Action

National & international commitments

Multiple national and international compacts commit Pakistan to stamping out illiteracy.

- According to Article 37-B of the Constitution, State shall be responsible for 'eradication of illiteracy and provision of free and compulsory education up to secondary level, within minimum possible time'.
- Pakistan is committed to improving literacy under the Education For All (EFA) and MDGs (Millennium Development Goals).
- Pakistan's National Plan of Action for EFA (Ministry of Education, 2003) commits the country to achieving 86% literacy by 2015.
- Pakistan reflected goals of UN Literacy Decade (2003-2012) in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP-I).
- Pakistan adopted UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) framework for the implementation of UNLD in 2005.
- Pakistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP-II) incorporates EFA and Literacy.
- Under National Education Policy (2009), Pakistan pledges to raise budgetary allocations for education to 7% of the GDP, and achieve 86% literacy by 2015

Ground to cover

However, Pakistan has a lot of ground to cover to bring down its illiterate population. As such, adult literacy and non-formal basic education programming will be central to the country's success. For instance, three of the six Dakar goals expressly emphasize acquisition of literacy skills and/or continuing learning opportunities for young and adults. (EFA Goal No 3, 4, and 6). Similarly, MDG No 2 (Universal Primary Education) has also set literacy rate as one of the indicators for progress.





EDUCATION FOR ALL



Six EFA Goals to be Achieved by 2015

- ① ECCE: Expanding early childhood care and education
- ② UPE: Universal primary education; Free and compulsory primary education for all
- ③ Continuing Education: Learning and life skills programmes for young and adults
- ④ Literacy: 50% increase in literacy rates
- ⑤ Gender: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary by 2005, and gender equality in education by 2015
- ⑥ Quality: Improving quality of education

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to Education

- Goal 2 – Achieve universal primary education
- Target 3 – Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
- Goal 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women
- Target 4 – Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015.



The Way to Go

The cherished Pakistan

There is no denying that every Pakistani dreams the dream of a better Pakistan. Different people interpret this dream differently – some hoping for a stronger Pakistan, others for a more prosperous Pakistan, and still others for a more open and democratic Pakistan. The core idea, however, remains betterment.



Literacy is the common denominator of betterment

Do we realize, however, that near-universal literacy is a necessary condition for any betterment at all? In other words, the road to a stronger, more prosperous, more open and democratic Pakistan leads through a literate environment in the society. Illiteracy not only blocks development of individual citizens, it also hampers collective progress in a society and evolution of its institutions.

A movement against illiteracy

The need of the hour is for Pakistan to declare a movement against illiteracy. Consistent allocation of adequate funds for education and literacy programming including NFBE could be a good starting point to demonstrate political will and leadership.



A national literacy movement

Pakistan needs to scale up literacy programming for its 55 million illiterate citizens. For, changing their lot will be primary to changing the country's fortunes in every sphere of life.

A national NFBE Strategy

For the seven million out-of-school children and youth, Pakistan needs to develop a NFBE strategy suited to the country's circumstances.

We have no option but to adopt the NFBE approach to reach the unreached. There are out of school children and illiterate young adults; there are those settlements where a formal school cannot be opened; and then there are working children who cannot attend formal primary school for any reason. Few thousands NFBE Centres half-heartedly supported by Federal and some Provincial Governments are not enough to cater to the learning needs of 7 million out of school children and about 20 million illiterate youth of age 10-24 years.



Essential preconditions

Experts and activists agree on a set of essential preconditions for successful literacy programming. These may be summarised as follows.

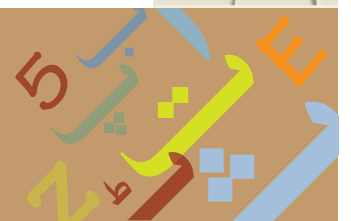
- 1 **GOAL AND STRATEGY:** To be successful, literacy programming must be planned keeping in view certain long term developmental goal, and these should be based on an agenda for social change that makes sense to the prospective learners (e.g. income generation, social and economic empowerment, better health care, awareness about roles and responsibilities etc.). Also, learners must see a clear path as how they can go beyond basic literacy (e.g. integrating neo-literates and NFBE graduates into formal schooling or continuing education).
- 2 **LEADERSHIP:** Literacy movement demands leadership, not merely the funds. Political parties and their leaders should spearhead the motivational drive for literacy in their respective constituencies. Education and literacy are long term investments, and unfortunately politicians take more interest in highlighting their short term and more visible achievements.
- 3 **ORGANIZATION:** Nothing can be achieved without proper organization. There must be a permanent organizational structure to conceive, plan, implement and monitor literacy and NFBE programmes. An organization with qualified permanent staff is needed to build, maintain, and impart expertise for training, material development, research & evaluation. Temporary project offices with people posted on deputation from outside can not succeed in building professional base, which is possible through continuity of working experience in a certain field.
- 4 **CONSISTENCY:** For best results, both policy and approach must be consistent over time. Uncertainties and controversies discourage talent and dishearten sincere work for literacy. Perhaps most important, the availability of funds must be sustained across budgetary period throughout the campaign. Literacy programmes should not be affected or disrupted due to changes in government or political upheavals.



The pieces of a strategy

The development sector sees an emerging consensus over what Pakistan needs to do to overcome rampant illiteracy. The key pieces of the proposed strategy are:

- **A Guiding Vision:** A clear sense of what to achieve, how to achieve it, what means and modalities to employ and how best to employ them, etc.
- **Guaranteed Finances:** Consistent flow of ample financial resources – e.g., a healthy percentage (a minimum of 10%) of the education budget or certain ratio of GDP/GNP, should specifically and exclusively be allocated every year for Literacy and NFBE. Legislation to commit the Federation matching grants to the provinces could work wonders.
- **A National Framework:** Clear and consistent policy guidelines on literacy and NFBE programmes, including clear cut policies, plans, and legislation by the federal and provincial legislatures to supplement literacy programmes.
- **Clear Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of federal, provincial, and district governments.
- **A Committed Leadership:** The top leadership – government bureaucrats, technocrats, elected representatives, political parties, CSOs etc., – all must support and lead literacy programmes at various levels.
- **A Strong Professional Base:** Establishment of an institute or resource centre for technical tasks like training, material development, research etc., could deliver the goods. At present, no such professional development centre or training institute is available for the neglected sub sector of literacy and NFBE in the country.
- **Inbuilt Partnerships:** Agreements and coordination and monitoring mechanisms, forums, and processes that bring federal and provincial stakeholders together for creating synergies, harmonization, and sharing experiences.



A trial by fire

Designing and rolling out literacy and NFBE interventions – and keeping the momentum going until the mission is accomplished will try every nerve and sinew of the nation. All tiers of the government and all segments of the society will have to go on a war footing before Pakistan can overcome illiteracy and set a firm foot forward towards a better tomorrow.

The burden of responsibility

Finally, let us not forget that the major share of the responsibility in this connection will rest squarely with the country's leaders, policymakers, and opinion leaders. Are you one of them? Are you prepared to play your part in the struggle? If not – have you considered the cost of doing nothing?

HDI, Literacy, and Pakistan

Out of the total 187 countries included in the 2011 Human Development Index (HDI), Pakistan ranks 145. Literacy is an important component of the Human Development Index (HDI), a United Nations statistical tool adopted by the global development community as a comparative measure of well being of the 'people' living in countries worldwide.

Does Pakistan remember that the HDI was pioneered (together with Human Development Report) by the celebrated Pakistani economist Dr Mehboob ul Haq? Since its inception in 1990, the HDI has become the global development community's favoured statistical tool or yardstick. It is a sad circumstance that the pioneer's country remains plagued with illiteracy and continues to score low on human development.



National Commitments of Pakistan

Constitution of Pakistan (1973)

State shall be responsible for:
 “ eradication of illiteracy and provision of free and compulsory education up to secondary level, within minimum possible time ”

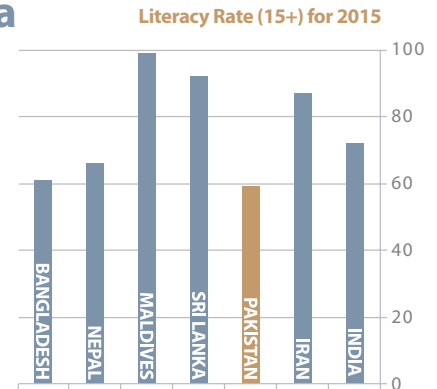
Article 37-B, 1973
 Constitution of Pakistan



Human Development in South and West Asia

(Source: UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011)

Country	Public expenditure on Education as % of GNP (2008)	Literacy Rate (15+) 2008	Projected Literacy Rate (15+) for 2015
India	3.2	63	72
Iran	4.8	82	87
Pakistan	2.9	54	59
Sri Lanka	5.4	91	92
Maldives	8.4	98	99
Nepal	3.7	58	66
Bangladesh	2.2	55	61



Why Pakistan lagged behind?

- **WEAK POLITICAL WILL** - More focus on infrastructure, immediate needs, and short term projects with more visible results – Education is a long term investment
- **LOW INVESTMENT ON EDUCATION** – Budget about 2% of GNP
 - Access issue – created missed out children
 - Quality issue – led to high drop out rate
- **INABILITY OF FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM** to cater needs of all children
- **HALF-BACKED LITERACY PROJECTS**, with half hearted bureaucratic support

An analysis of Literacy Programmes in Pakistan

- **COMMITMENT GAP:** Lack of Political Will – funds were sanctioned but politicians could not provide leadership – politicization of literacy projects
- **POLICY GAP:** A clear and strong policy on Literacy and NFBE has been missing: Lack of administrative will – open and disguised opposition to Literacy & NFBE by the traditional planners.
- **ORGANIZATIONAL GAP:** Absence of permanent organizational structure – led to coordination gap
- **FINANCIAL RESOURCES GAP:** limited financial assistance, and uncertainty about funding
- **TECHNICAL CAPACITY GAP:** 'islands of excellence' but weak professional base /Lack of continuity of experience/independent research and evaluation studies

Peace: Arms versus Education

- **21 developing countries** are currently spending more on arms than on primary schools – if they were to divert just 10% of military spending to education, they could put an additional 9.5 million children into school
- **Pakistan**, which has one of the world's largest out-of-school populations (7 million), spends over seven times as much on arms as on primary schools.
- **Donors have not met the commitments** they made in 2005 to increase aid.
- **Only a 0.5% levy** on mobile phone transactions in Europe could raise US\$894 million for education annually.
- **6 Days Spending on Military** by aid donors would close the US\$16 billion Education for All external financing gap.

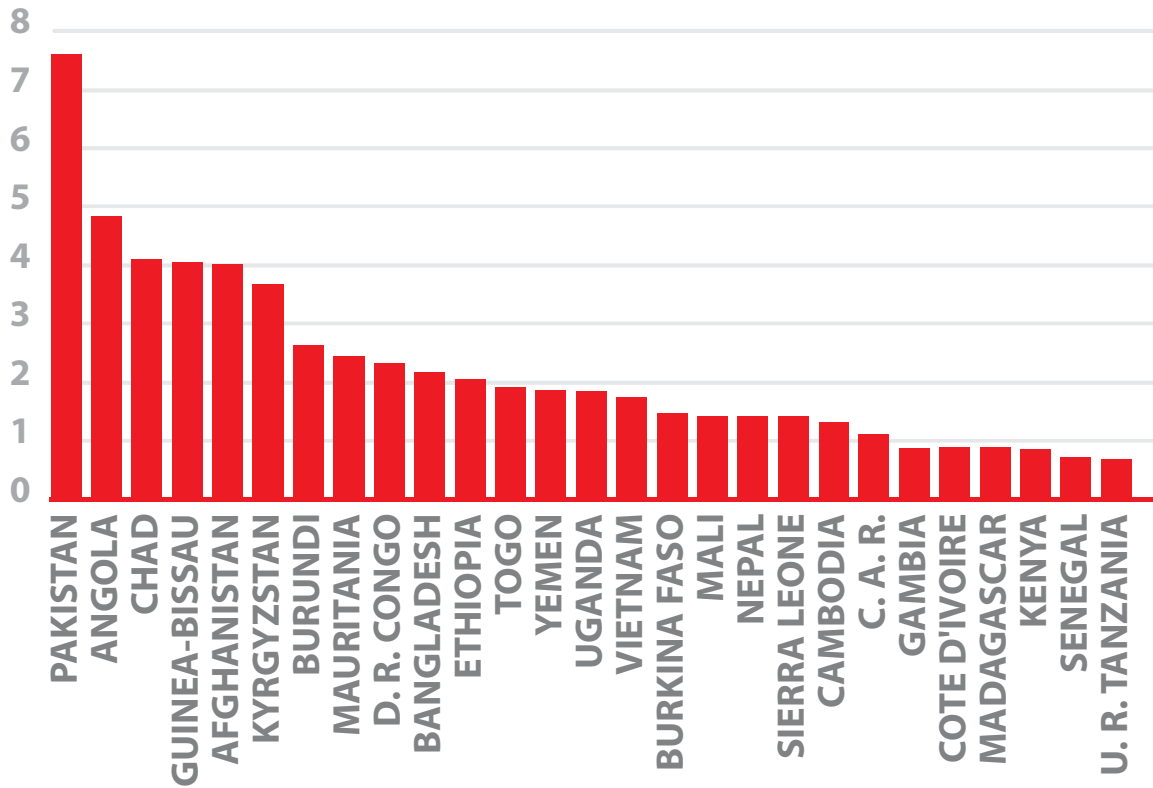
Source:
UNESCO, EFA GMR Report 2011



MILITARY SPENDING DIVERTING EDUCATION RESOURCES

- 21 of the world's poorest developing countries that spend more on **military budgets** than primary education
- 10% of their military spending could put **9.5 million children** into school

RATIO OF MILITARY TO PRIMARY EDUCATION EXPENDITURE



ADULT LITERACY RATES (10 YRS+)

BY INCOME QUINTILES, GENDER AND LOCATION

	URBAN			RURAL			OVERALL		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
PAKISTAN	80	63	71	64	34	48	69	44	56
1st Quintile	54	35	44	45	17	31	47	20	33
2nd Quintile	64	46	55	68	23	40	59	29	44
3rd Quintile	73	54	64	66	35	50	68	41	54
4th Quintile	82	65	74	73	44	58	77	52	64
5th Quintile	93	81	87	83	57	70	89	70	79

Source: Table 2.27, Pakistan Social & Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) Survey 2007/08

WILL PAKISTAN ACHIEVE EFA GOALS AND MDGs?

INDICATOR & YEAR	RATES (PSLM)			Average Annual Growth Rate	Projected Rate by 2015
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09		
Literacy Rate (10+)	55	56	57	1.818%.	68 %
Primary Net Enrolment Rate (NER)	56	55	57	0.892	63 %





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