

# ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF GIRLS AND BOYS INCLUDING RETURNEES, REFUGEES, AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

DECEMBER 30, 2023

### EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT (ECW) FUNDED MULTI-YEAR RESILIENCE PROGRAMME (MYRP)

*"IMPROVING ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR REFUGEE, CRISIS  
AFFECTED AND OTHERWISE VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN PAKISTAN."*

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THANK YOU EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT (ECW) FOR PROVIDING FUNDING TO SUPPORT EDUCATION IN BALOCHISTAN.

## List of Abbreviations

ALP	Alternate Learning Programme
BEMIS	Balochistan Education Management Information System
BESP	Balochistan Education Sector Plan
BoQ	Bill of Quantity
BRSP	Balochistan Rural Support Programme
CAR	Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees
CCAR	Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees
CDPR	Consortium of Development Policy Research
CRPs	Community Resource Persons
DEO	District Education Officers
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
FGD	Focused Group Discussions
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
INEE	Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LSO	Local Support Organisations
LSOs	Local Support Organisations
MHM	Menstrual Health Management
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psycho-social Support
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOSC	Out of School Children
PITE	Provincial Institute of Teachers Education
PPIU	Policy and Planning Implementation Unit
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
PWSN	Person(s) with Special Needs
RRRP	Regional Refugee Response Plan
RSPN	Rural Support Programmes Network
SAFRON	The Ministry of States and Frontier Regions
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMC	School Management Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations Human Rights Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development's
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas



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## Executive Summary

This report assesses the educational needs of children of ages 3 to 18 years with a particular focus on Afghan refugees, Pakistani host communities, and those with special needs under the 'Improving access to inclusive and equitable quality education for refugee, crisis-affected, and otherwise vulnerable children and adolescents in Pakistan' project. This Project is funded by Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and is being implemented by the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) and the Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) as RSPN's sub-partner in districts Loralai, Kohlu, and Panjgur districts of Baluchistan. The Project started in February 2022 and concludes in February 2025. The ECW - Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) is designed to address systemic barriers hindering vulnerable children's access to quality education. The Project aims to ensure inclusion, protection, safe learning environments, strengthened education systems, improved educational outcomes for girls, and the mobilisation of resources by all ECW MYRP partners in Pakistan, for an improved education system.

The needs assessment undertaken for this report utilised a mixed-method approach to understand socio-cultural factors, evaluate existing education services and policies, identify gaps, and provide recommendations for improving Project design. Primary data collection was through consultations, interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with community members, officials of education department, Government of Baluchistan, provincial Commissioner Afghan Refugees (CAR) and representatives of UNHCR, and school visits in project districts.

The project has opened 129 primary level Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centres and 48 Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres in district Loralai and Panjgur and 13 ALP centres in Afghan refugee villages in district Loralai. A total of 5,600 learners (including 547 Afghan refugee children) have been enrolled in the ALP centres. 56% of these learners are girls. In the ECE centres enrolled 4,052 children (53% girls). The project also identified 151 children in the schools that had difficulty in seeing and in hearing. These 151 children have been provided assistive devices to better integrate them into classrooms.

The findings reveal a significant gap between policy formulation and implementation by the government, citing challenges such as political influence, funding barriers, and inadequate planning. Noteworthy issues include a concerning dropout rate among girls, perpetuated by domestic duties, cultural constraints, early marriages, and limited educational options (in terms of number of schools and in short distance) beyond primary levels for girls. Poverty, child labour, and perceived low quality of education by parents further hinder enrolment.

From the school monitoring data of the government, we found that teachers' attendance in schools' directly correlates with student attendance, and functionality of schools. Students' attendance remains low, and schools became non-functional where teachers do not attend schools regularly. Emphasising the need for regular monitoring by the Balochistan Education Department and effectively addressing the key barriers that result in teacher absenteeism. While the BEMIS-Real Time Monitoring System offers comprehensive and relevant data and continuously highlights the issue of teacher absenteeism, but we did not find any actions taken against teacher absenteeism.

For Afghan refugees, significant challenges arise from the absence of a policy on refugees and the recent announcement by the Government of Pakistan to repatriate illegal foreigners, impacting the education of Afghan refugees. Despite Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders having official permission to open and operate bank accounts, obtain a mobile SIM card, and access local health facilities, uncertainty persists within the education system regarding the acceptance of PoR cards for both enrolment in some schools and to participate in the board examinations at secondary and higher secondary level. There is no official directive issued to schools to give admissions in schools to POR holders. The absence of a legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers leads to confusion and constraints in long-term planning efforts for Afghan refugees' education.

The MYRP project is designed with an underlying assumption that basic facilities in schools exist, and the project will build on existing services, resulting in value addition. However, the scenario in Balochistan is very different. The Balochistan Education Monitoring Information System data (2023) shows that only 46 percent schools in district

Loralai, 25 percent schools in district Panjgur and 33 percent schools in district Kohlu are equipped with basic facilities. Except six schools established by UNHCR in the refugee villages of district Loralai, Afghan refugees face a widespread absence of school infrastructure.

The Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act delineates commendable provisions; however, its implementation is weak, , impeding provision of inclusive education. At the district level, there is a complete lack of school structures, trained teaching staff, and curriculum to address the needs of children with special needs. The misalignment between project design and the situation on the ground has resulted in incoherence in project implementation and the project needs to address this issue to have realistic outcomes.

As part of the ECW project, Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) primary and middle level was planned to implement through establishing community schools in locations where girls of age (9-16 years) could not attend schools due to long distances to existing government schools. But the government decided to implement the ALP within the existing government schools in second shift. Therefore, the challenges related to accessibility of learners and distance to government schools remains unresolved and the project implementing organisations (RSPN and BRSP) face challenges to meet the school enrolment targets. The establishment of middle-level ALP centres shows slow progress and encounters additional challenges, such as delays in approval of the ALP middle level curriculum by the government, insufficient facilities in the existing government schools and short duration of the project.

In summary, tackling these challenges necessitates a comprehensive and coordinated endeavour involving political commitment, structural adjustments, targeted resource distribution, effective utilisation, and an approach attuned to realities on the ground. Bridging the divide between policy formulation and effective on-the-ground implementation is crucial to ensure a fair and inclusive education system for all. This underscores the necessity for a thorough reassessment and adjustment of the project's strategies to ensure both its effectiveness and sustainability, the latter depending on government.

## 1. Introduction

This report presents an assessment of the needs, vulnerabilities, and priorities of learners i.e. Pakistani girls and boys, Afghan refugee children, and children with special needs in the ECW-RSPN project districts of Balochistan. This assessment report has five sections. The first section introduces the report. The second section introduces the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP). The third section presents the approach and methodology of the assessment. Section four presents key findings and section five presents a conclusion followed by recommendations in section six.

## 2. Description of the Project

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is a Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) for the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan funded by UN-Global Fund for Education in emergencies/crisis. The overall objective of the programme is to address systemic barriers that prevent vulnerable children and adolescents including refugees in crisis affected areas from accessing inclusive and equitable quality education. The MYRP design document for Pakistan identifies the following six outcomes that contribute to achieving its overall objective:

1. The most vulnerable girls and boys, including adolescents and those living with disabilities, have access to inclusive, relevant, and quality learning.
2. The most vulnerable girls and boys, including adolescents and those living with disabilities, are better protected and have improved mental and physical well-being.
3. Learning environments are safe, accessible, and conducive to learning for all learners starting with the most vulnerable girls and boys and including adolescents and those living with disabilities.
4. Education systems in Pakistan are strengthened through sustained capacity development support at the national, provincial, community and school level.
5. The educational outcomes of girls, including adolescent girls, are improved through targeted programming focused on enrolment, retention, and learning.
6. Sufficient resources are mobilised to scale implementation of the multi-year programme and to monitor programme quality.

The MYRP design document emphasises on strategically aligning with Pakistan's National Education Policy, the National Education Response and Resilience Plan for COVID-19, the Pakistan Schools Safety Framework, Humanitarian Response Plan, Education Sector Plans for Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Bill and the Regional Refugee Response Plan. The MYRP is underpinned by a holistic approach known as the 'whole of children approach' that aims to improve access and learning outcomes of children with a focus on their social, physical, and mental well-being. This approach is endorsed by the OECD Refugee Education: Integration Models and Practices in OECD countries (2019). Using this approach in programme design and implementation at the policy, schools and community levels ensures a cohesive integration of educational needs of children enabled by supportive school and community systems.

The overall ECW programme in Pakistan aims to improve access to inclusive and equitable quality education for at least 155,000 Afghan refugees, crisis-affected, and otherwise vulnerable children, and adolescents. Through in-country partners ECW aims to reach at least 18,900 children through pre-primary education; 105,000 children through primary education; and 31,100 children through secondary education. Within each target group, partners will include 60% girls and 12% children with special needs, and at least 40% Afghan refugee children within these targets. The project is being implemented by three in-country organisations i.e. UNICEF, VSO and RSPN.

The Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) is responsible for implementing the MYRP project in Balochistan, with the Balochistan Rural Support Programme as its implementing organisation, the government Education and Health Departments at the provincial and district levels. The project is being implemented in three districts i.e. Kohlu, Panjgur, and Loralai. These districts were selected due to their high prevalence of out-of-school children, the presence of Afghan refugee populations in Loralai, and their vulnerability to crises and disasters. The RSPN component of the programme aims to enrol 42,420 children into schools, of which 20 percent are to be Afghan



refugee children, 13 percent children with special needs and overall 60 percent girls. This assessment is focused on the RSPN component of the programme.

### 3. Approach and Methodology

#### 3.1 Objective of the assessment

The objective of this assessment is to understand the educational needs, vulnerabilities, and priorities of girls and boys of the ages of 3-18 years including Afghan refugees, host communities, and those living with special needs in the programme districts. The purpose of this assignment is to inform evidence-based programming and interventions to address the educational needs of the target group. The specific objectives are:

- To explore the socio-cultural context and factors impacting the well-being and educational development of these groups, with a focus on overcoming participation barriers, especially for girls of age 5-16 years.
- To review the existing education services, policies, and support systems for Afghan refugees, children with special needs and other vulnerable groups and evaluate their implementation status.
- To identify gaps and challenges in addressing the specific needs of Afghan refugees and children with special needs in the programme districts.
- To assess how the ECW project address the needs, vulnerabilities, and priorities of girls, boys, and adolescents of the ages of 3-18 years including refugees, host communities, and those living with special needs.
- To provide practical recommendations for interventions and programmes to improve inclusive education, promote the right to education, and contribute to enhancing their overall well-being.

#### 3.2 Methodology

The assessment is based on a mix method approach including a review of existing policies and strategies of education for Afghan refugees and children with special needs, secondary data for quantitative analysis of enrolment status of girls and boys and primary data for qualitative analysis for understanding needs and key challenges faced by the project's target groups. On the policy front, the consultant conducted a review of existing education policies and strategies of the government specific to Afghan refugees and children with special needs. On the programme side, the consultant reviewed the MYRP design document and the RSPN programme documents for the period February 2022 to October 2023 to understand the programme design, progress on key performance indicators and to identify the challenges and barriers faced during the programme implementation. A list of the documents reviewed is attached as Annex – I.

The primary data was collected through consultative meetings, interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and participant observation by visiting schools in the three programme districts. Consultative meetings and interviews were conducted with the implementing partners RSPN and BRSP programme staff, Additional Secretary School Education Department of the Government of Balochistan, the Commissioner of Afghan Refugees (CAR) for Balochistan province, District Education Officers in each district, UNHCR representatives and schoolteachers (details are presented in Annex – II). FGDs were conducted with women and men community members including Afghan refugees. FGDs with male community members were conducted by the consultant himself and FGDs with female community members were done by female staff members of BRSP, as a male consultant could not meet with women here. . The consultant developed guidelines for the FGDs and oriented the BRSP female staff members to conduct the FGDs and collect data, accordingly. The geographic and gender coverage of the FGDs is presented in Table 1 and details are presented in Annex – II.

Table 1: Geographic and gender coverage of FGDs

District	Number of FGDs	Description of the FGDs
Loralai	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 FGDs with female community members: two with Afghan refugees and two with female local community members and one with female project staff members</li> <li>- 4 FGDs with male community members: 2 with Afghan refugees and 2 with local communities including LSO members, CRPs, and Teachers</li> </ul>

Kohlu	3	- One with male community members and one with female community members and one with female project staff members
Panjgur	4	- One with male community members, two with female community members and one with female project staff members

The consultant also visited a total of eight schools and had interactions with teachers and students to understand their perspective of the educational needs at school level. Table 2 provides a list of total schools visited and details are presented in Annex -II.

Table 2: District wise number of schools visited.

District	Number of Schools visited	Description of the Schools visited
Loralai	6	- 2 non-formal education schools (Accelerated Learning Centres) for Afghan refugees - 1 Early Childhood Centre - 2 Accelerated Learning Centres primary level and 1 middle level
Kohlu	1	- One female school selected for the project interventions
Panjgur	2	- 1 Early Childhood Centre and 1 Accelerated Learning Centre Primary level

To assess the status of schools in the three programme districts information from the Baluchistan Education Statistics (2021-22) report prepared by the School Education Department Government of Baluchistan and school monthly monitoring data available on the Balochistan Education Management Information System (BEMIS) was accessed and analysed.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 The Policy Context

To understand the multi-pronged issue of promoting inclusion and access to quality education for all children of the ages of 5-16 years, relevant policies, Acts and Strategy documents were reviewed. The policy review developed a thorough understanding of the issue at the policy level and to identify enablers and barriers to access quality education among children with special needs, children of Afghan refugees and host communities.

An understanding of relevant policies is crucial as policies will play a key role in determining the long-term success or failure of the RSPN-ECW project interventions. For example, in the context of Afghan refugees, if the policies do not extend a conducive environment for the long-term, their education will be interrupted resulting in lack of access to education and weak learning outcomes. Similarly, if policies do not support equitable higher education and employment opportunities for Afghan refugees and children with special needs, the outcome of improved well-being and equitable integration in the society may not be fully realised.

The following section presents a summary of key policies and strategies relevant to the education of Afghan refugees, children with special needs and girls and boys in general:

**The Constitution of Pakistan (1973)** outlines that the ‘State shall be responsible for eradication of illiteracy and provision of free and compulsory education up to secondary level, within minimum possible time.’ In addition, the Article 25-A is on the Right to Education mandates the Government of Pakistan to provide education to all children from the ages of five to sixteen years. At the global level, Pakistan has signed the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 that includes SDG 4: – a commitment to ensure ‘Quality Education.’ After the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the constitution of Pakistan, the provinces have strong legislative and financial autonomy in the education sector. Each province determines its education sector plans and has the autonomy to implement them. In the context of Balochistan, the Balochistan Compulsory Education Act (2014) provides a legal framework for the implementation of Article 25A.

**The Balochistan Free and Compulsory Education Act (2014)** has 12 clauses and focuses on children between the ages 5-16 years. It focuses on parents and school management committees, to ensure the enrolment of children. It also outlines the offences and punishments in case of child drop out and child labour. The Act states that the school shall be available within a 2-kilometre radius from the residence of the child and Clause 10 of the Act states that ‘The Government shall make facilities for Education available in the province’.

**The Balochistan Education Sector Plan - BESP (2020-25)** developed by the Secondary Education Department of Government of Baluchistan is a comprehensive document identifying the issues and needs faced by the education sector in Baluchistan. It proposes a shift from the conventional approach of education to a child centred learning approach i.e. focusing on the welfare of each child within and outside the school. The document establishes that despite an increased budgetary allocation, the percentage of out of school children has not been significantly reduced during 2009-2020<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the learning outcomes of the children have also failed to improve. This is mainly attributed to the lack of focus on learning outcomes, weak management, and limited management capacity of the province’s education system with poor planning, a failure to assess classroom needs, weak monitoring, and ineffective accountability mechanisms.

The education sector plan, BESP 2020-25, prioritises learning and access, emphasising improved governance and a robust management framework, alongside recognising four cross-cutting areas: standards, capacity, gender inclusiveness, and partnerships. It also targets enhanced technical and vocational education, focusing on quality, relevance, and access, while placing the child, especially the girl child, at the centre of reforms with a comprehensive approach covering learning, access, participation, and governance.

One of the most progressive aspects of the BESP (2020-25) is its recognition of children with special needs and Afghan refugees. BESP strategies for children with special needs include:

- a. Specialised data collection methods (clear definition of children with special needs, training of enumerators for identification of children with special needs and conduct household surveys) for identification of children with special needs
- b. Establishing one school for children with special needs in each district
- c. Strengthen the capacity of care and management of special education through conducting capacity needs analysis of the Directorate of Special Education its personnels and develop their capacity according to the needs of the children with special needs.
- d. An advocacy campaign will be undertaken to target change in attitudes towards the welfare of children with special needs within the community, education officials and policymakers.

The BESP 2020-25 also contains strategies for Afghan children in schools and in refugee camps, including the following.

- a. The Government of Baluchistan will engage with UNHCR and the Federal Government to improve school conditions in refugee camps through building up a fund.
- b. Implementation of the Pakistani curriculum in the refugee schools. However, the textbooks and the language of teaching should be Dari and Pashto – the mother tongues of the refugee children.
- c. Provision of better facilities and involvement of communities to increase enrolment – especially, for female children.
- d. Government will provide quotas in government secondary schools and colleges for refugee children.

**Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act (2017)** was passed by the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2017 and assented to by the Governor, Balochistan on 07<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The Act promotes and ensures the full and effective inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the community, in line with Islamic teachings and international best practices, to protect their rights. One of the major achievements of the Act is that it provides a legal definition of

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<sup>1</sup> The education budget of Balochistan has increased from PKR 14 billion in 2009-10 to PKR 75 billion in 2019-20

‘disability.’ It is defined this as ‘a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities and shall include physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments while interacting with various other physical and psychological barriers and hinder performance of persons suffering from such conditions to participate fully and effectively in day-to-day performance and interaction with others on an equal basis.’ In the context of ensuring equity in education for children with special needs, the Act focuses on the following:

- a. Provision of adequate facilities without discrimination
- b. Ensuring free education in compliance with Article 25-A of the constitution, 50 percent fee waiver at all private and public higher education institutions and special quota/seats for children with special needs.
- c. Establishing and strengthening special education institutions.
- d. Ensure inclusive education at all levels focusing on personality development, creativity and strengthening of physical and mental capabilities of persons with special needs.
- e. The Government shall train and equip an adequate number of teachers to respond to the children with special needs in schools.

The Act restructure and renames the Provincial Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons to an autonomous body called as Provincial Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities consisting the following:- (i) Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Department (Chairperson) (ii) Secretary Social Welfare Department (Vice Chairperson) (iii) Representative of Civil Society working on Disabilities (Co-Chair) (iv) Person with Disability (on yearly rotation Basis) (Deputy Chairperson) (v) DG of provincial Health Departments (Member) (vi) One representative each (not below the level of Additional Secretary) of the Planning and Development Department, Law Department, Finance, Manpower, Home, Labour, Education, Sports and Culture Department, Industries, Services & General Administration Department, C & W, Women Development Department (vii) Divisional Director of Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony (Member) (viii) Director Bait-ul-Mal (Member) (ix) President or nominee of Balochistan Chamber of Commerce & Industries (Member) (x) Four persons to be nominated by the Provincial Council from amongst the DPOs and persons engaged in the empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. (xi) Two MPAs (one male and one female) to be nominated by the Speaker of Provincial Assembly (xii) DG Social Welfare and Special Education Focal Person on UNCRDP.

It also notes that the financing for the proposed implementation of the Act shall be done through the following:

- i. Grants from provincial governments.
- ii. Grants from international organisations, governments, and other such bodies.
- iii. Imposition of taxes and other charges by the government for rehabilitation of person with disabilities.
- iv. Fines and penalties under this Act
- v. Donations and bequests by private persons; and
- vi. Any other source.

**The Refugee Education Strategy Pakistan (2020-2022)** was developed by UNHCR in coordination with the Governments of Balochistan and KP provinces that host the highest number of Afghan refugees. The four strategic objectives of the Refugee Education Strategy are as follows:

- a. Access to quality primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- b. Increase girls’ participation in education.
- c. Include refugees within the public education programmes and systems.
- d. Strengthen the linkages to education pathways.

The revised strategy differs from the previous strategy of 2016-19 as it includes Afghan refugees in the mainstream public education system in Pakistan as opposed to focusing on refugee schools. The approach of this strategy is to ensure higher enrolment and retention rates as well as improved learning outcomes that will provide Afghan refugees with employment opportunities, civic participation, improved well-being, and sustainable reintegration when they return to Afghanistan. The strategy focuses on strengthening linkages of UNHCR education initiatives with livelihoods programmes in the same communities.

The strategy also highlights the importance of cross-border collaboration and combined solutions between UNHCR Pakistan and UNHCR Afghanistan, IOM, the World Bank, GIZ, the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan and other partners working in Afghanistan, to ensure the continuation of education and a recognition of educational and vocational certification issued by both countries (Pakistan and Afghanistan) for the overall well-being and a secure future of refugee children and youth.

**The Document Renewal and Information Verification Exercise (DRIVE – 2022)** report published by the UNHCR in September 2022 reports that 59 percent of the Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders of 15 years of age and above report a zero monthly income, 17 percent reported a monthly income between PKR 1-10,000 and about 17 percent reported a monthly income between PKR 10,001 to 25,000, with only 1.3 percent reporting a monthly income of PKR 50,001 or higher. The top ten sources of income include wage labour, self-employment, financial assistance from relatives within Pakistan, short-term/seasonal employment, remittance, agriculture, and transportation business. Only 1.5% of the total PoR card holders reported having permanent jobs/salaried income. In terms of education, 53 percent of PoR card holders between the ages of 6-12 years and 44 percent of the population between the ages of 12-17 reported having no education. The report further notes that the gender barrier to access education is reflected across all education levels (primary, secondary, and higher).

**The Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) for the Afghanistan Situation (2022)** led by the UNHCR and is supported by UNICEF and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Action (UNOCHA). The report notes that the absence of a national asylum law in Pakistan warrants that its policies and responses to the Afghan refugee crisis are pre-dominantly based on administrative orders. In Pakistan, there is no separate ministry for refugees nor a policy to govern them. The Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) oversees Afghan refugees through the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR) and the provincial Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR). A Cooperation Agreement of 1993 between UNHCR and Government of Pakistan acknowledges the UNHCR's role in ensuring refugee protection and supporting resilience. Although the RRRP response activities were scaled up in 2022 due to an increased demand, as a result of the 2022 floods in Pakistan that had a devastating impact on the citizens of Pakistan, Afghan refugees and the host communities, the RRRP plan reveals that forty-one out of the total calamity hit districts hosted 800,000 Afghan refugees with two-thirds of these in only four districts in KP, Balochistan and Sindh provinces. In the wake of these events the RRRP supported multi-sectoral interventions including increasing women and girls' access to health and education facilities and community decision-making processes. Primary school aged students were provided cash-based interventions for education, and secondary school aged girls were provided support to access non formal education (accelerated education, literacy programmes).

The document identifies gaps in the implementation of the Regional Refugee Response Plan in the context of Pakistan. One of the major issues is accessibility of the refugees to basic services including education, health, employment, and housing. Since the refugee response is directed through administrative orders, the documents of registered refugees are designed to have limited validity and do not confer guaranteed access to public services. In addition, unregistered refugees do not have the right to formal employment, opening a bank account or purchasing a sim card that further marginalises them. Rental agreements with refugees are informal, which exposes them to the possibility of exploitation or premature eviction.

**National Refugee Bill – (2023)** was proposed as a private member bill in the National Assembly on 30th March 2023. The Bill proposes giving a legal cover to the act of non-refoulment. This means that no refugee shall be returned, forcefully expelled, or extradited from Pakistan where their life, safety or freedom is threatened unless they pose a threat to the national security or convicted for a serious crime. Under this bill, a refugee is defined as:

- a. A citizen of other nationality failing to seek protection in their country of origin due to the fear of prosecution due to their race, religion, ethnicity, or membership of a particular social or political group.
- b. Not having a nationality and being outside of their country of residence and unwilling to return to their country due to the fear.

- c. Forced to leave their country of nationality/habitual residence due to armed conflict, external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, situations of violence or serious human rights violation, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of their country of origin/nationality/habitual residence.
- d. Family member(s) of a refugee whose claim is based on the same grounds as that of the main applicant shall qualify derivative refugee status, notwithstanding the right of the family member(s) to apply for the refugee status independently.

The Bill is gender sensitive and progressive. It recognises the applicant refugees as a legal refugee. It also recognises the spouse, children under the age of 18 and other dependents of a registered refugee as refugees and warrants their protection. It further calls for provision of special care for persons with special needs. It also ensures provision of care facilities for women and unattended children. The Bill emphasises that refugees shall be accorded the same treatment as nationals with regards to the right to free primary education. It also calls for fair treatment in accessing job opportunities. This Bill has not been passed by the Pakistan parliament.

Pakistan is not obligated by the 1951 Convention on Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, and it lacks specific national laws or established procedures for protecting refugees or determining their status within its territory. Regarding Afghan refugees, the UNHCR assumes responsibility for refugee status determination, operating under its mandate established by the General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) of December 14, 1950, and on behalf of the Government of Pakistan as per the 1993 Cooperation Agreement between them<sup>2</sup>. While Pakistan generally collaborates with the UNHCR and grants temporary stay to recognised refugees and asylum-seekers, the absence of international refugee conventions and national legislation creates uncertainties and challenges in ensuring sufficient protection and assistance for Afghan refugees within the country.

In summary the policies and strategies reviewed highlight the following key points:

**Education:**

- The Constitution of Pakistan emphasises eradicating illiteracy and providing free and compulsory education up to the secondary level to everyone living in Pakistan.
- The Balochistan Compulsory Education Act (2014) focuses on enrolling children aged five to 16 years.
- Balochistan Education Sector Plan (2020-25) focuses on inclusive education, recognising children with special needs and Afghan refugees, and proposes strategies for their inclusion into the education system.

**Educational Needs of Children with Special Needs:**

- Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act (2017) outlines provisions for equitable education, inclusive institutions, and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

**Educational Needs of Afghan refugee children**

- Pakistan has not signed the Refugee Convention of 1951, neither its 1967 protocols nor have any domestic law on refugees and asylum seekers. Afghan refugees are provided special treatment on the basis of administrative orders.
- The Refugee Education Strategy Pakistan (2020-22) aims to integrate Afghan refugee children into mainstream public education for improved outcomes.

#### 4.2 Policy Implementation Challenges

Despite collaborative efforts of the Federal and Provincial Governments, along with support from development partners, civil society organisations, and donors, Pakistan continues to grapple with an education crisis. Pakistan has the world's second highest number of Out of School Children (OOSC)<sup>3</sup>. An estimated 22.8 million (44 percent of

<sup>2</sup> Asylum system in Pakistan – UNHCR Pakistan

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/education>

school age children) children including 12.2 million girls and 10.7 million boys of the ages 5-16 years are out of school. The number of out of school children almost doubles after the primary level (ie grade five) with 22 percent of girls leaving school after the sixth grade (UNICEF). Most of those who attend schools face inadequate schooling conditions, poor quality of teaching, resulting into poor learning outcomes.

Whereas as inadequate budgets are often cited as the reason for not implementing policies, the sector faces serious governance issues such as teacher absenteeism, weak monitoring of skills in which teachers have been trained numerous times and overall poor accountability of the system to the people of Pakistan. Pakistan's budget for education for the year 2021 was 2.38 percent of its GDP, it is not only less than the global average of 4.52 percent, but it also fails to meet the commitment of the 4 percent target set by the Education 2030 Framework for Action. It is critical to note that the number of children of ages of 5-16 years is 63 million and so the allocated budget demonstrates a huge funding gap. The Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education (2023)<sup>4</sup> proposes that a budget allocation at least 6 percent of the GDP to education is required.

However, this is one side of the story. After the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, when provinces became responsible for education and other sectors, the education budget has significantly increased in the provinces. However, education outcomes either remain constant or have shown negligible improvements. Table 3 shows that the overall budget for education in Pakistan, and in Balochistan, has increased by about 60 per cent in between 2017 and 2022. Of this, about 90 per cent is spent on 'current expenditures' such as salaries, leaving very limited room for further development of the sector. The second reason for poor educational outcomes is lack of effective planning e.g. allocations and utilisation of available resources. This is supported by Figure 1 that presents the performance of schools in terms of students' attendance and facilities available for students in the schools over the years. Overall, there is no significant change seen on availability of school facilities, teacher attendance, improvements in teaching and learning environments, investments in school infrastructure, professional development of teachers and thus attendance of students.

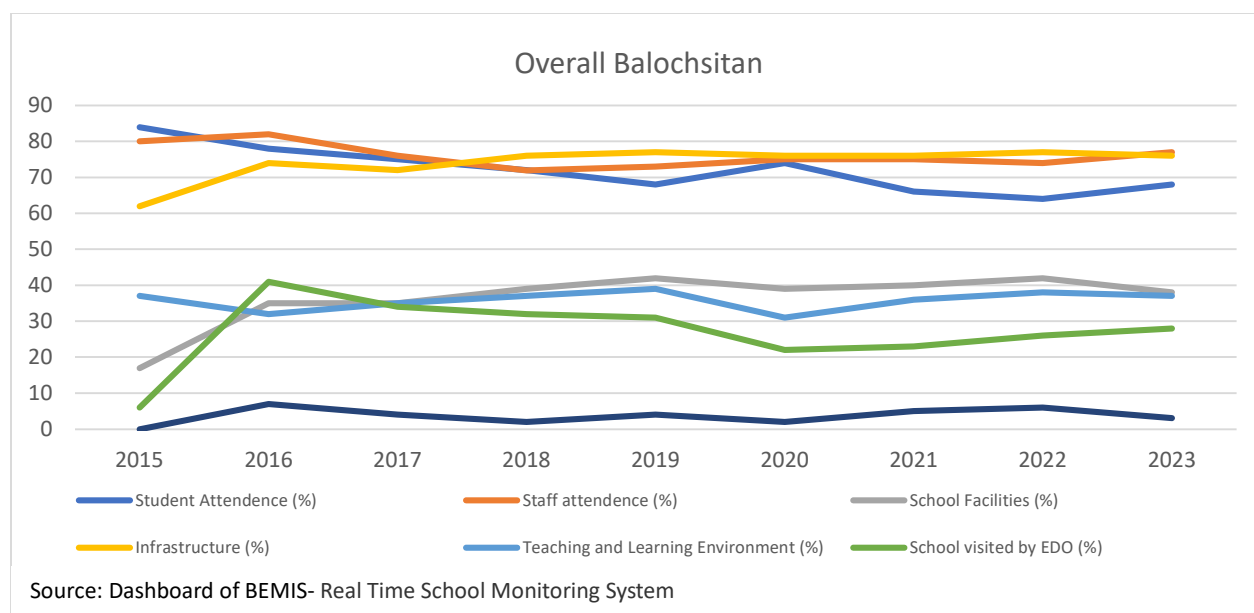
Table 3: Expenditure on Education (PKR in billion)

Expenditure Type	All Pakistan			Balochistan		
	2016-17	2021-22	% Change	2016-17	2021-22	% Change
Current	596.89	973.92	63	40.57	68.00	68
Development	102.33	127.73	25	7.13	8.55	20
Total	699.22	1,101.65	58	47.70	76.55	60
Current Expenditure as a percentage of total budget	85	88		85	89	

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-23

Figure 1: Year wise status of school facilities (%) and student attendance (%) in sample schools monitored from 2015-2023 for overall Balochistan.

<sup>4</sup> <https://page.org.pk/education-budget-of-pakistan/>



#### 4.3 Educational Challenges of Afghan refugees

There are significant challenge facing the integration of Afghan refugee children in the education system of Pakistan. Pakistan is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention of 1951, nor its 1967 protocols. The Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocols safeguard refugees by defining their status, upholding the principle of non-refoulement, ensuring their rights and freedoms, prohibiting discrimination, encouraging international cooperation, and promoting durable solutions to their displacement.

There is no national legislation protecting refugees of asylum seekers, or a recognition of the principle of non-refoulment for unregistered refugees. The principle of non-refoulment is upheld by the Government of Pakistan for registered Afghan refugees as a special treatment and Pakistan has been hosting millions of Afghan refugees for the last four decades.

The Document Renewal and Verification Exercise (DRIVE 2022) to document and verify data on registered Afghan refugees was conducted between March 2021 and February 2022 by the Government of Pakistan ie the Ministry of States & Frontier Regions (SAFRON), the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with technical support from the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). The UNHCR published the DRIVE report reveals that there are around 1.2 million registered Afghan refugees and 135,745 Unregistered Members of Registered Families (UMRFs) that include 5 percent parents, 37 percent spouses and 58 percent children above the age of five. Of the total population, only 32 percent reside in refugee villages. Around 52.3 percent of registered refugees reside in KP province, 24.5 percent live in Balochistan, 5.6 percent in Sindh, 14.4 percent in Punjab and 3.0 percent in Islamabad Capital Territory.

Of the total registered Afghan refugees, 463,730 (36.2 percent) are of the school going age children. Of the total PoR card holders, 69 percent reported having no education. This includes 53 percent of the PoR cardholders between the ages of 6-11 years and 44 percent of the PoR holders between the ages of 12-17 years. 72 percent of the females reported having no education, compared to 66 percent males.

According to UNCHR, Pakistan hosts 3.7 million Afghan refugees. Out of which 1.3 million have PoR cards, 840,0000 possessing Afghan Citizenship Card (ACC) and an estimated 1.5 million are not registered (without any documentation).



On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023, the Ministry of Interior announced the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP)'. This Plan notifies that all illegal foreigners are to leave Pakistan by 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023. The deadline has been extended to end February 2024. The IFRP outlines the repatriation plan of Afghan refugees in three phases 1) Deportation of illegal refugees 2) Deportation of ACC Holders and 3) Deportation of PoR card holders. The urgency stems from the Minister of Interior's claim that Afghan nationals are linked to major terror attacks in Pakistan. The decision addresses the increased trans-national threat from insurgent groups in the border regions, especially in KP and Balochistan. The spillover of violence and crime from Afghanistan, facilitated by illegal mobility, has led to an organised illegal ecosystem. (Islamabad Policy Institute, 2023). The Act is also prompted by political issues between Afghan's current Taliban, de facto government and Pakistan and issues related to the transit of Afghan refugees through Pakistan to other countries.

In response to the announcement, the IOM, the UN migration agency and UNHCR issued a joint statement on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023<sup>5</sup>. The statement notes that forced repatriation of Afghan refugees may result in serious human rights violations, including the separation of families and deportation of minors. It further notes that the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan poses risks for those returning, especially women and girls. It acknowledges Pakistan's generosity of hosting Afghan refugees for the past four decades and extends support to sustainably managing the refugee situation in coordination with the Government of Pakistan. It re-emphasises UNHCR's message to suspend forcible return of Afghan nationals and ensure that any possible returns to Afghanistan take place in a safe, dignified, and voluntary manner. Following this, a circular was issued by the Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees (CCAR) under the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) stating that until the decision of the Federal Cabinet, PoR card holders and ACC holder may temporarily reside in Pakistan. They will be facilitated only in voluntary repatriation. It also prohibits any arrests, detention, or misdemeanour towards registered refugees.

In addition, the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) issued a notification to extend the validity of PoR cards till 31st December 2023. Despite the GoP's efforts to ensure the protection of registered refugees, the UNHCR Chief, Volker Türk issued a statement on 15th November 2023 highlighting that 86% of the families returning to Afghanistan stated fear of arrest as their reason for leaving. The statement appealed to the Government of Pakistan to cease deportation until procedures and safeguards required by international law are in place. (UNHCR and IoM November 2023).

While the crackdown claims to target illegal settlers involved in crime, it affects unregistered Afghan migrants, potentially exposing them to detention and prosecution. The UNHCR and International Organisation of Immigration (IoM) issued a report on the arrest and detention of Afghan refugees on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. The report compares the rate of arrest and detention of PoR card holders for the months of November 2022 and November 2023, which has increased thirteen-fold (UNHCR 2023).<sup>6</sup> This also includes individuals those who have moved to Pakistan due to war in Afghanistan, in the late 1970s and whose successive generations have been born in Pakistan.

The UNCHR 2023 also report out of the total Afghan population returned, included 96 percent illegal immigrants, 2 percent PoR card holders and 2 percent Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders since January 2023. Those who returned, 92% of them reported fear of arrest as their reason to return (*ibid*).

It is crucial to note that refugee students might suffer more frequently from mental health issues than other students. Thus, training, and capacitating teachers to respond to the varying degrees of trauma and the emotional needs of the children through counselling or psychosocial support activities as well as timely referrals is key to creating a safe and supportive environment for learners (IASC, 2007).

#### 4.4 Educational Challenges for Persons with Special Needs

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<sup>5</sup> <https://pakistan.iom.int/news/iom-and-unhcr-urge-pakistan-maintain-protection-space-afghans-need-safety>

<sup>6</sup> <https://reporting.unhcr.org/afghanistan-pakistan-unhcr-iom-flash-update-6>

The Consortium of Development Policy Research (CDPR) a Pakistan based research and dissemination organisation supported by the International Growth Centre (IGC) highlights a major discrepancy in terms of disability statistics stemming from the lack of a clear definition of disability<sup>7</sup>. The 2017 national census by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported 0.48 percent of the total population with special needs. While the World Bank reports 3.56 percent of the total population with special needs in Pakistan. UNESCO reports that 15 percent of the global out of school are children with special needs (2020). The CDPR reports that children with special needs are ten times less likely to enrol in schools. The PACER centre – Champions for Children with Disabilities, reports that the dropout of children with special needs is 40 percent, more than double that of their peers with no special needs<sup>8</sup>. The Pakistan Education Policy 2023 is a significant positive step towards promoting inclusive education. It includes provision of special education services and iterates the importance of accessing quality education for all children regardless of their background or abilities.

Moving from the margins: Mainstreaming persons with disabilities in Pakistan (2014) – report commissioned by British Council Pakistan and conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit, notes that Pakistan may have around 27 million people with special needs. The data for the types of special needs is unavailable. A lack of engagement and inclusion of these people could be costing the economy between 4.9% to 6.3% of GDP each year (Roman et al, 2014). A study conducted to measure the enrolment rates and the learning outcomes of the children with special needs in Punjab (Singal et al, 2020) reports that first, these children are less likely to attend schools and second, they score low on basic reading and arithmetic learning outcomes. It is also important to note that most of these children are enrolled in mainstream schools instead of special schools and mainstream schools have no support for those who can be mainstreamed into education.

The report on Access to Schools and Learning Outcomes of Children with Disabilities in Pakistan (2021) and the MYRP project document highlights the following issues faced in integration of children with special needs in mainstream schools in Pakistan:

- a. Children with disabilities face stigma and their education is consistently deprioritised.
- b. Lack of appropriate infrastructure including ramps, rails for walking, separate toilets, wheelchair friendly schools, aids and appliances and customised teaching and learning materials.
- c. Lack of specialised training of teachers to understand and respond to children with special needs including provision of special focus classes and seating arrangement.
- d. Lack of classroom and school policies to ensure inclusion and mainstreaming of children with special needs.
- e. The lack of coherent data on the number of girls and boys living with disabilities, or even a standardised definition of disability, represent a critical challenge to providing needed services.

In the Defeating Inequalities in School Access: a case of children with disabilities in Pakistan (2014), Hameed and Manzoor argue that the devolution of power from the federal to the provincial governments in Pakistan has had a negative impact on the inclusion of persons with special needs. It argues that provincial governments do not have the capacity and resources for specialised training of teachers and provision of quality services catering to the needs of persons with special needs. In addition, the non-availability of data at the national level further de-prioritises the issue.

The Balochistan Education Sector Plan - BESP (2020-25) recognises that there is neither any policy nor any provision of social and physical infrastructure in regular government schools for children with special needs. Similarly, the Directorate of Special Education runs 11 institutions (one experimenting inclusive education and rest are for exclusively for children with special needs) in the province and has limited capacity to address the needs of children with special needs. The key challenges include: (i) unavailability of clear information on special children, (ii) limited coverage of the directorate of special education (iii) shortage of expertise within the directorate to address the needs of children with special needs (iv) parents and communities, display indifference towards the challenges and needs of these children.

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<sup>7</sup> Leaving no one behind: The role of special education in Pakistan online accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.pacer.org/parent/dropout-prevention/>

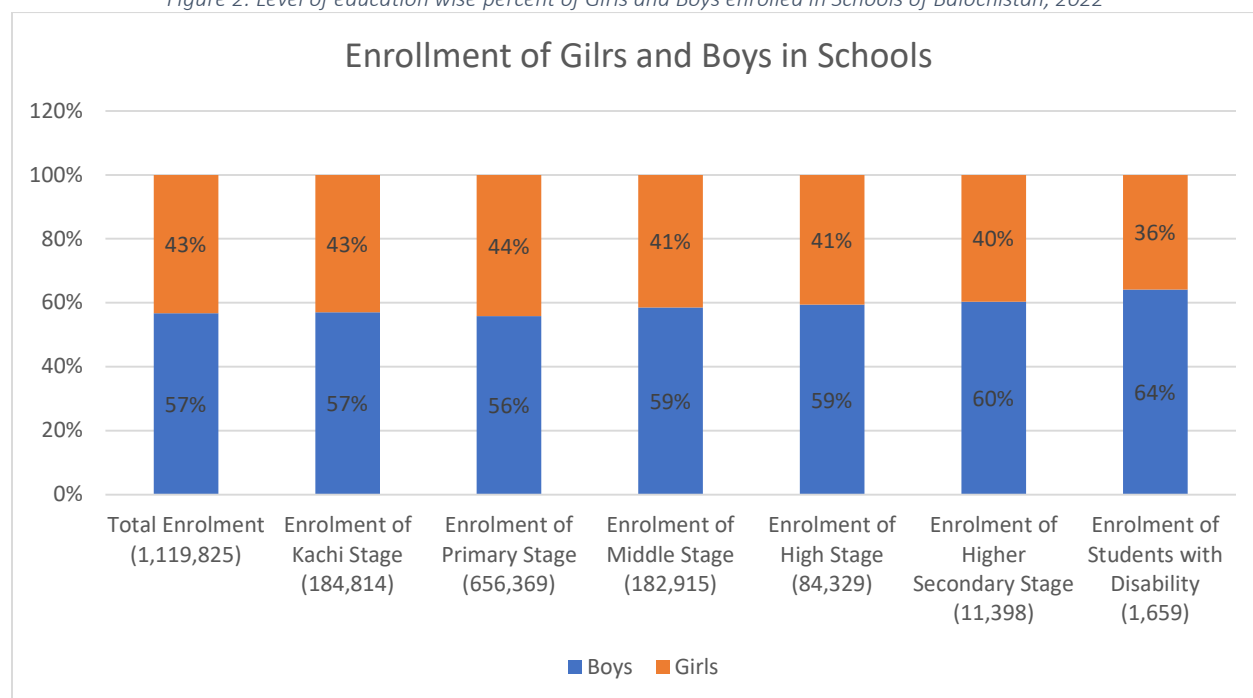
## 4.5 Challenges to Formal Education in Balochistan

### Social Bias- Girls Enrolment and Drop Out

According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-23, the literacy rate is lowest in Balochistan Province as compared to other provinces of Pakistan. Literacy rate in Baluchistan is 46 percent with 29 percent of female are literate and 61 percent male are literate.

The Population and Housing Census of Pakistan 2017, reports the total population of 5-16 years olds as 4,339,328 and out of which 47 percent (2,028,863 children) are out of school.<sup>9</sup> According to the Balochistan Education Statistics (BES 2021-22) report, there were 1.12 million children (43 percent girls and 57 percent boys) enrolled in primary to higher secondary level in the year 2022. As presented in Figure 2, the percentage of girls to boys is lower across all levels of education. The overall enrolment ratio of girls to boys is 0.76 and gender gap steadily increases at higher levels of education, reaching 0.66 at the higher secondary school level<sup>10</sup>. According to the BES 2021-22 report the ratio of girls to boys at the primary level has increased from 0.69 in 2016-17 to 0.76 in 2021-22.

Figure 2: Level of education wise percent of Girls and Boys enrolled in Schools of Balochistan, 2022



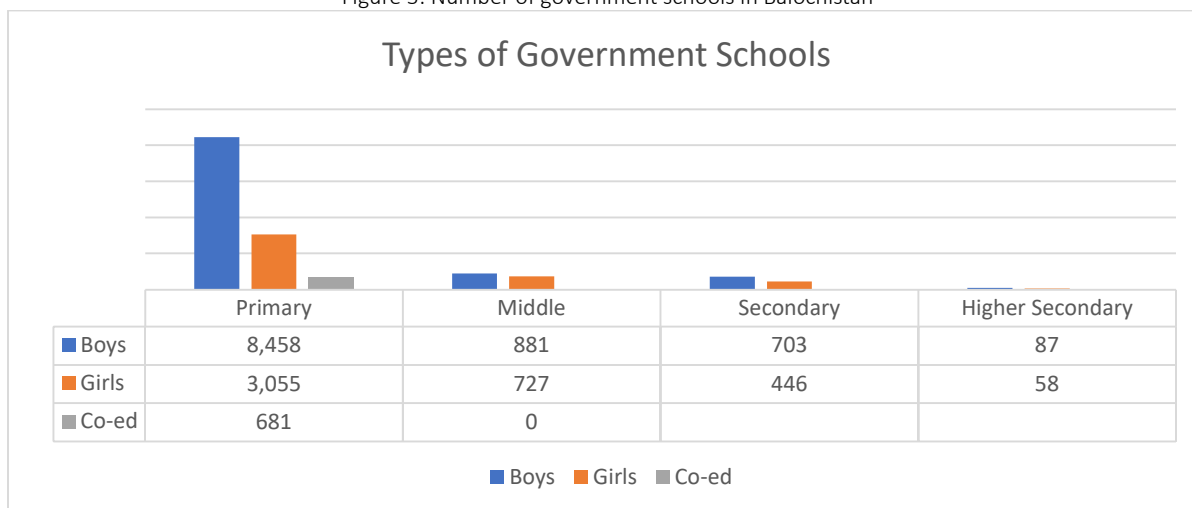
Source: Balochistan Education Statistics (BES 2021-22) Report, Government of Balochistan Schools Education Department

On the supply side one of the key reasons for lower enrolment of girls is the non-availability of schools for girls. According to the BES 2021-22 report of the total 15,092 schools in the province, only 28 percent are for girls, 5 percent are co-education (boys and girls) and 67 percent are for boys. This disparity exists across all levels of education as presented in Figure 3. The BES 2021-22 report further reveals that 21 percent of girls' schools are non-functional and 16 percent of girls' schools are shelter less. Thus, only 17 percent of the total schools in Balochistan are for girls.

<sup>9</sup> Pak Alliance for Maths and Science. 2021. The missing third: an out of school study of Pakistani 5-16 year olds. Islamabad: Pak Alliance for Maths and Science. iii+47 pp. ISBN 978-969-23194-4-7

<sup>10</sup> Ratio of girls to boys enrolment reflects the level of girls' access to education compared to that of boys. This is calculated by dividing girls' enrolment at a given education level to the enrolment of boys at the same level. A value of less than 1 indicates that there are fewer girls than boys in the education system while a ratio higher than 1 indicates proportionately more girls enrolled as compared to boys. A score of 1 reflects equal enrolment for boys and girls.

Figure 3: Number of government schools in Balochistan



Source: Balochistan Education Statistics report 2021-22

Alif Ailaan<sup>11</sup> (2018) reports that, on average, there is a middle school located at every 250 kilometres distance and a secondary school at every 260 kilometres distance, in Balochistan<sup>12</sup>. These huge distances to schools are supplemented with a 70 percent poverty<sup>13</sup> in the province – leading to the dismal situation.

The White Paper Series issue number 01 published by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in January 2022 explores the key reasons for low girls' enrolment in schools in Balochistan<sup>14</sup>. It argues that the supply side issue of a low number of post-primary schools for girls is a key reason for their discontinuation of education. The White Paper notes that the lack of availability of post primary schools for girls de-prioritises girls' education among parents and community members since they do not foresee the long-term benefits of educating a girl. This argument is also reflected in the Balochistan Education Sector statistics (2016-17) that reports a high percentage of girls dropping out of schools after the age of 10. In addition, the lack of livelihood opportunities for girls within their villages and districts further reinforces the lack of a long-term benefit of educating a girl child, making it even more difficult to convince parents and communities to send girls to school.

#### Lack of Physical Facilities in Schools

The Balochistan Education Statistics (2021-22) reports on the status of physical facilities in schools in Balochistan. There are a total of 15,096 schools in Balochistan (67 percent boys' and 28 percent girls' schools). As shown in Figure 4, school facilities are equally lacking in both cases. Toilets are not available in 48 percent of girls' and 64% of boys' schools. Drinking water is available in only 33 percent of girls' and 29 percent of boys' schools. Computer labs are available in 6 percent of the schools and 20 percent of schools don't have access to electricity.

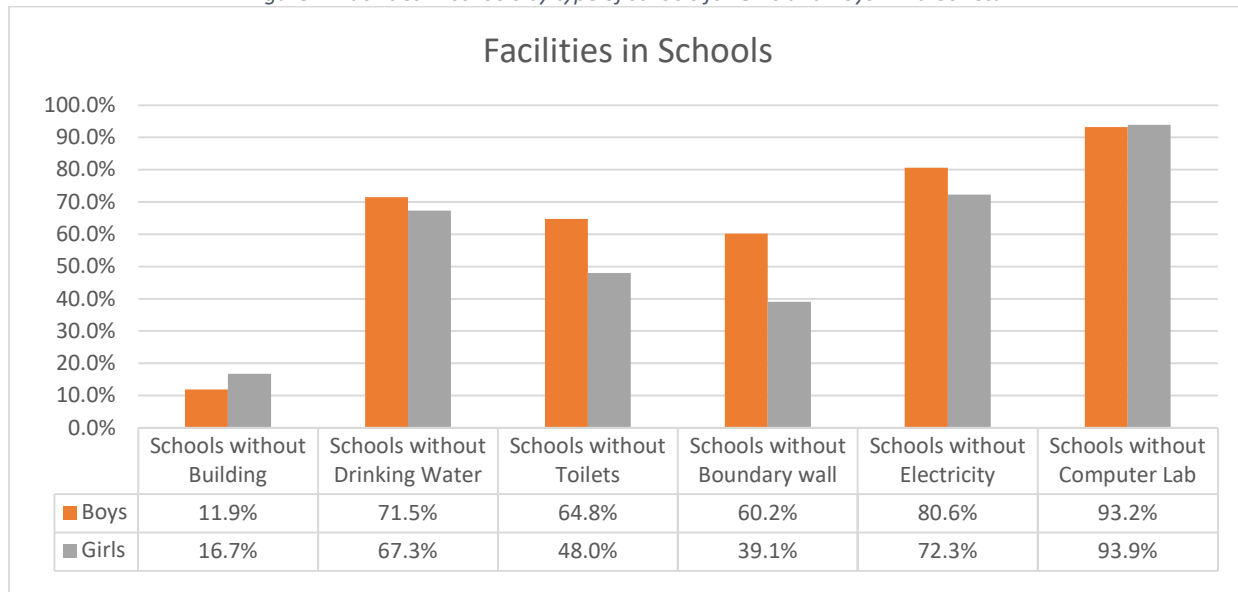
<sup>11</sup> Alif Ailaan (Urdu: الف اعلان) was an education campaign programme funded by DFID from 2013-2018. The programme aimed to highlight education on priority basis in Pakistan and make the masses aware of the importance of education.

<sup>12</sup> <https://thefridaytimes.com/04-Mar-2023/baloch-children-turn-away-from-education-claim-it-does-not-feed-their-families>

<sup>13</sup> <https://thefridaytimes.com/04-Mar-2023/baloch-children-turn-away-from-education-claim-it-does-not-feed-their-families>

<sup>14</sup> [https://mathsandscience.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-unserved\\_WP01.pdf](https://mathsandscience.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-unserved_WP01.pdf)

Figure 4: Facilities in schools by type of schools for Girls and Boys in Balochistan



Source: Balochistan Education Statistics (BES 2021-22) Report

The BES 2021-22 also reports on the state of Effective Transition Rate (ETR)<sup>15</sup>, Gender Parity Index (GPI)<sup>16</sup> and Survival Rates (SR)<sup>17</sup>. According to this report, in 2022, Balochistan reported an ETR of 92 percent from primary to middle level and middle to seconder level. The GPI for effective transition rate from primary to middle is 0.98 since this value is closer to 1 (total gender equality). A Survival Rate approaching 100 percent indicates a high level of retention and low dropout incidence. In the case of Balochistan, the survival rate of students until grade 5 stands at 69 percent, leaning positively in favour of girls (72.9 percent). This indicates that significant, positive steps are taken by the Balochistan Education Department, in collaboration with other development actors, to improve gender parity and improve retention rates , over the past five years. For example, the Balochistan Education Statistics report 2016-17 reports on girls' retention rate in schools disaggregated by age<sup>18</sup>. The report highlights that girls dropped out of school, disaggregated by age reflects a sharp increase in the rate of drop out among girls after the age of 10 years<sup>19</sup>, presented in figure 5.

<sup>15</sup> Transition rate is defined as the percentage of students advancing from one level of schooling to the next (e.g. primary to middle stage of education or middle to higher stage of education). (BES 2021-22)

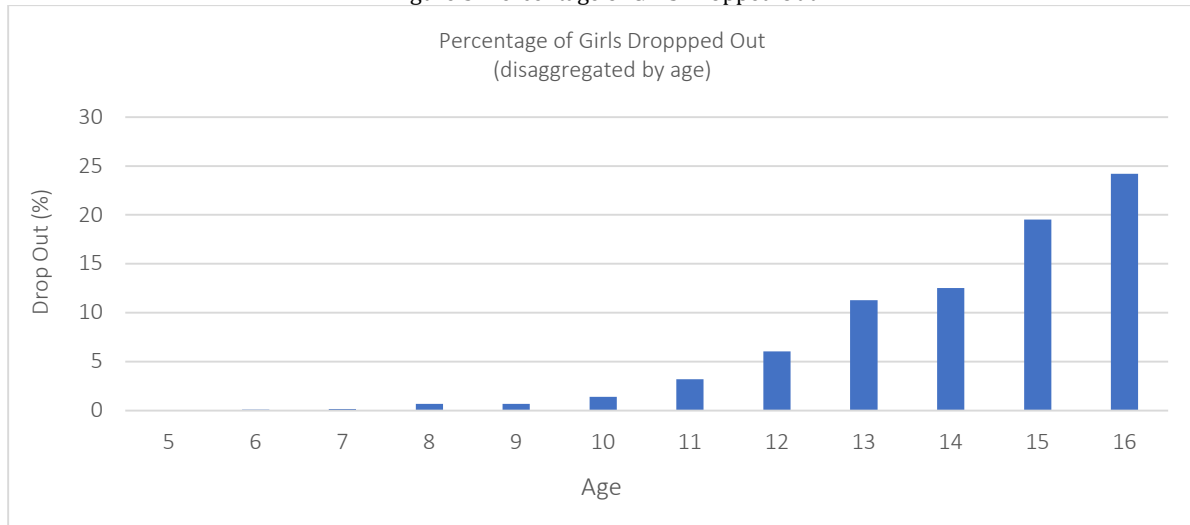
<sup>16</sup> Gender Parity Index (GPI) is the ratio of the female effective transition rate from primary to middle to the male value for the same indicator. It is calculated by dividing the female value for the indicator by the male value. A GPI equal to 1 indicated parity between females and males. A value less than 1 indicates disparity in favour of males and a greater than 1 indicates disparity in favour of females. (BES 2021-22)

<sup>17</sup> Survival rate to grade 5 is the proper on of a cohort of pupils who reached grade 5, expressed as a percentage of pupils enrolled in the first grade of a given cycle in a given school year. This indicator is used to show the extent to which the school system can retain pupils and reflects the dropout rate. It is also used to measure the impact of dropout on internal efficiency. (BES 2021-22)

<sup>18</sup> [http://emis.gob.pk/Uploads/BalochistanEducationStatistics/Balochistan\\_Education\\_Statistics\\_2016-17.pdf](http://emis.gob.pk/Uploads/BalochistanEducationStatistics/Balochistan_Education_Statistics_2016-17.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> [https://mathsandscience.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-unserved\\_WP01.pdf](https://mathsandscience.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-unserved_WP01.pdf)

Figure 5: Percentage of Girls Dropped Out



Source: Balochistan Education Statistics report 2016-17

Secondary literature suggests that the various reasons for girls dropping out of school after the age of 10 may include i) young girls are engaged in household chores and responsible for taking care of their younger siblings ii) girls are forced to discontinue their education after puberty iii) non availability of middle and high schools for girls discourages the girls and parents to continue their education. Early marriages were also reported one of the reasons of girls drop out by the participants of FGDs for this assessment.

#### 4.6. Status of Schools in Project Districts and Project Response

Balochistan has the highest proportion of out of school children in Pakistan – 59 percent of girls and 38 percent of boys are out of school in the provinces. In Kohlu 49 percent of children are out of school and in Loralai 39 percent of children are out of school (PSLM 2019-20). Data about Panjgur is not available as Panjgur was not covered in the PSLM survey 2019-20. The Balochistan Education Statistics report (2021-22) reports that 20,846 students are enrolled in district Loralai, 20,273 students in district Kohlu, and 34,967 in district Panjgur. Overall, 51 percent of children enrolled in these three project districts are boys and 49 percent are girls. The gender wise disaggregated enrolment data for each district is presented in Table 4.

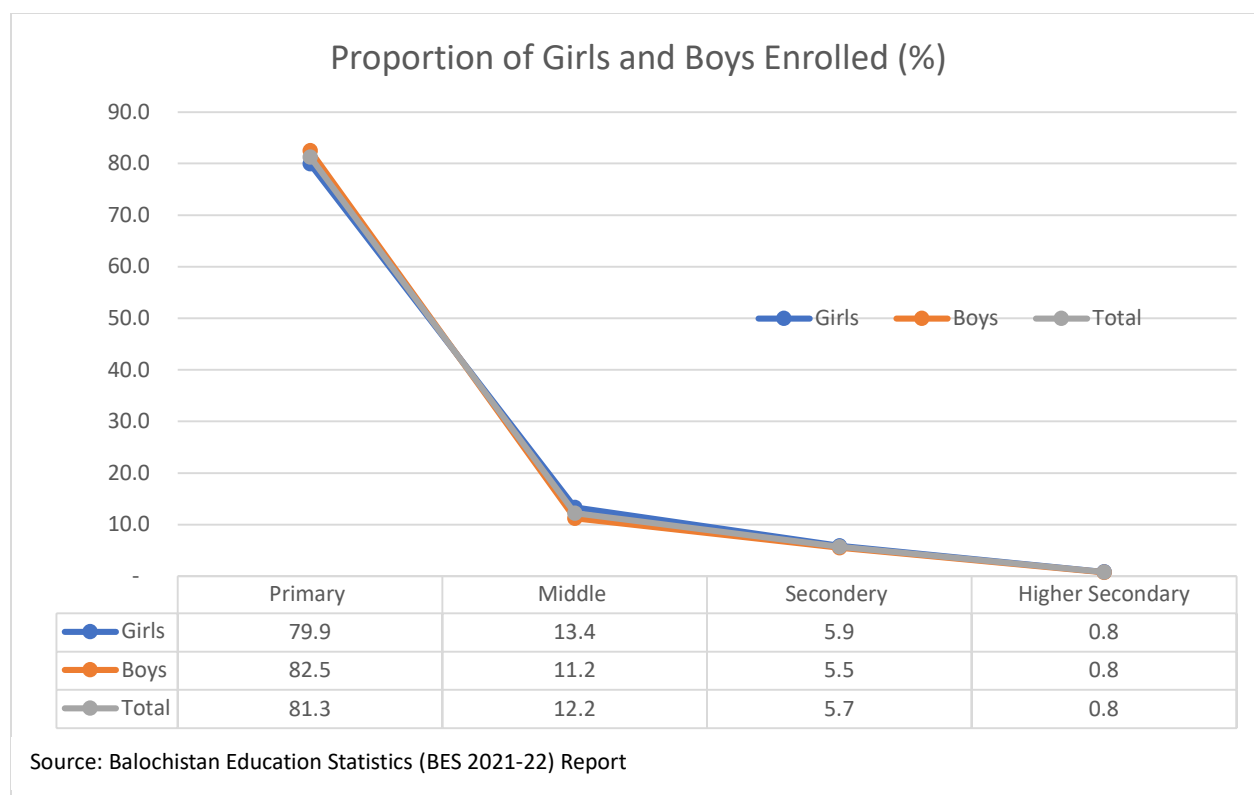
Table 4: Total number of Girls and Boys enrolled in schools in the project districts (2022)

Level of Education	Kohlu		Loralai		Panjgur	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Primary	8,293	9,866	7,770	8,884	13,502	13,511
Middle	899	566	1,615	1,072	2,426	2,742
Secondary	301	326	816	622	1,054	1,207
Higher Secondary	6	16	67	-	241	284
Total	9,499	10,774	10,268	10,578	17,223	17,744

Source: Balochistan Education Statistics report 2021-22

Figure 6 presents the proportion of girls and boys enrolled at each level of education in the project districts, showing a sharp drop out for both girls and boys in all three districts after the primary level (81 percent to 12 percent). This continuously declines at the secondary level and remains at less than one percent at the higher secondary level.

Figure 6: Proportion of Girls and Boys Enrolled by level of education in the Project Districts in 2022



One of the key reasons for this dropout is the unavailability of schools at higher levels of education. The district wise number of schools by level of education for girls and boys is presented in Table 5. Overall, there are 1,325 schools in the project districts of which 83% are primary level schools, 10 percent middle schools and seven percent secondary level schools.

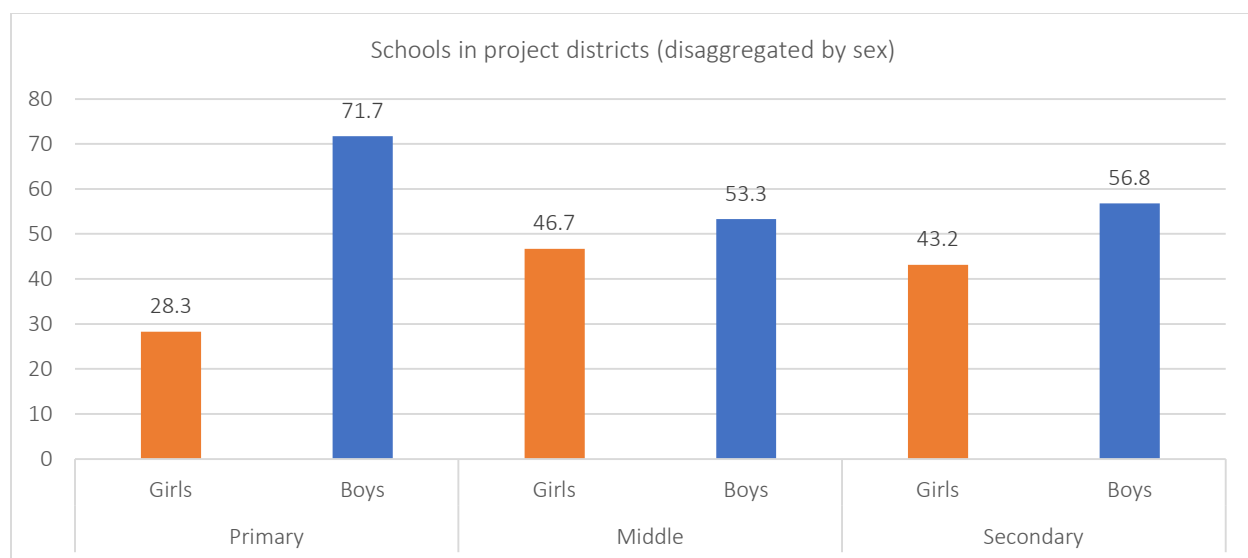
Table 5: Education and gender wise number of schools in project districts (2022)

District	Total Schools	Primary			Middle		Secondary	
		Girls	Boys	Co-ed	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Loralai	409	95	234	14	18	22	13	13
Kohlu	494	67	344	12	24	22	9	16
Panjgur	422	138	181	17	21	28	16	21
Total	1,325	300	759	43	63	72	38	50

Source: Balochistan Education Statistics report 2021-22

Figure 7 reveals that 72 percent of the total primary schools are for boys and only 28.3 percent of these schools are for girls. Overall, only 31.3 percent of the total schools are all girls' schools, excluding co-education schools.

Figure 7: Total Schools in Project Districts



Source: Source: Balochistan Education Statistics report 2021-22

A baseline of 151 schools under the ECW project was conducted in February 2023 by RSPN in the project districts. The report identifies the following barriers to access education: a) long distances to and from school, b) missing facilities in schools i.e. only 27% of the schools had toilet facilities, 7% had drinking water and no school had handwashing facilities c) high teacher absenteeism d) lack of parent and teacher interest in children's education d) children engaged in labour and e) non-availability of infrastructure for persons with special needs.

The inadequate school infrastructure for children is also evident from the BES 2021-22 report. Table 6 presents information about single room and shelter-less primary schools. A total of 470 (20 percent girls) schools, with more than half of them in district Kohlu, have single rooms. Another 60 schools (40 percent girls) are without school buildings. The number of shelter-less schools is highest in district Panjgur, followed by Kohlu and Loralai.

Table 6: Number of Single room and Shelter less Primary Schools in the Project Districts

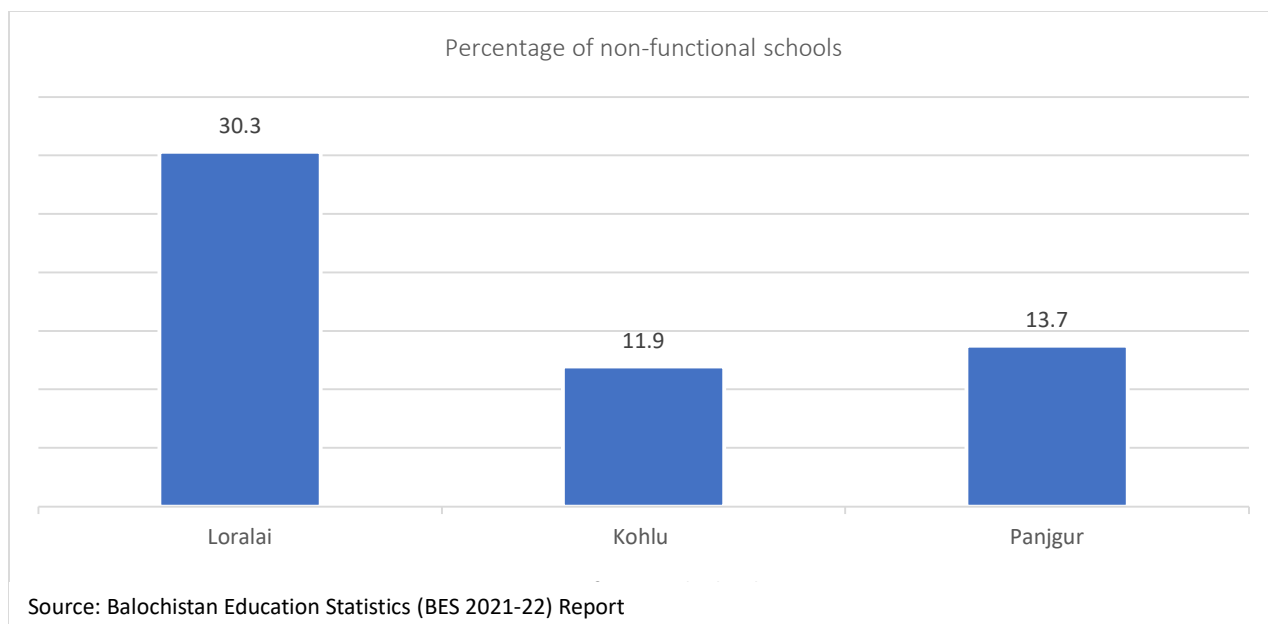
District	Single Room Primary Schools			Shelter less Primary Schools		
	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys
Loralai	129	28	101	4	1	3
Kohlu	256	32	224	26	6	20
Panjgur	85	41	44	30	17	13
Total	470	101	369	60	24	36

Source: Balochistan Education Statistics report 2021-22

Figure 8 presents the status of non-functional schools in the project districts. In district Kohlu, 12 percent of the schools (59 schools: 54 boys' and 5 girls' schools) are non-functional. In district Panjgur, 14 percent schools (58 schools: 38 boys' and 20 girls' schools) are non-functional. In district Loralai, 30 percent schools (124 schools 91 boys' and 33 girls' schools) are non-functional. Loralai has the highest number of non-functional schools.

Figure 8: Percentage of non-functional schools in project districts





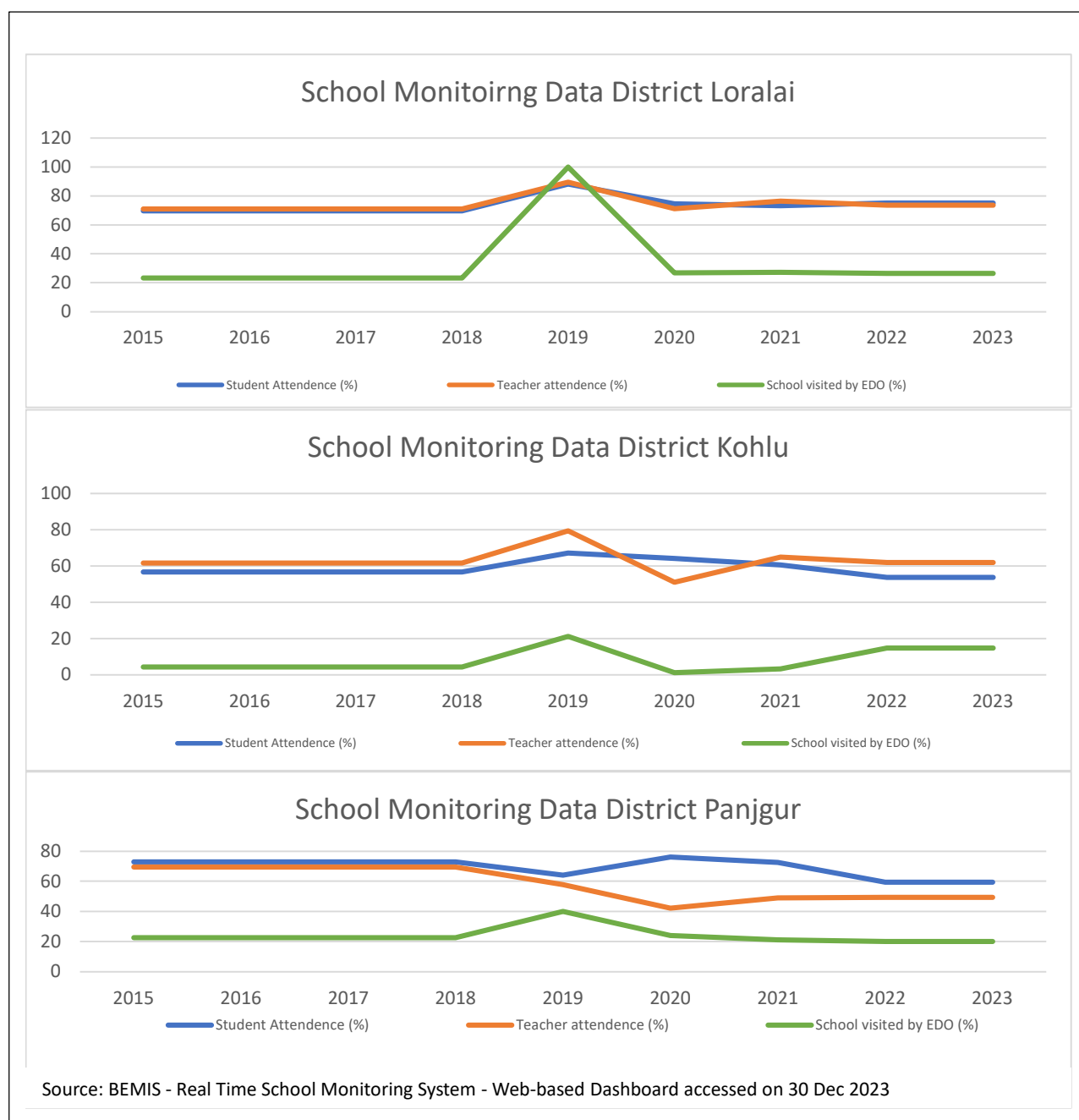
The BEMIS-Real Time School Monitoring System (RTSMS) data shows that the main reasons for non-functionality of schools are teacher absenteeism, lack of monitoring by education authorities, missing school infrastructure and missing facilities at school. Figure 9 presents the relationship between school visits by the District Education Officers (DEOs) and teachers' and students' attendance in the project districts, based on BEMIS-RTSMS data. Three key findings are observed. First, there is a positive correlation between the two wherein an increased number of visits by the DEO is associated with higher teacher attendance, subsequently resulting in improved student attendance.

Second, the average rate of attendance for teachers and students varies across districts, with Loralai at 75.1 percent, Panjgur at 59.5 percent, and Kohlu at 53.7 percent.

Third, the teachers and student attendance have experienced positive changes in district Loralai, remaining relatively constant in Kohlu, while witnessing a decline in Panjgur district over time.

The main reason for school non-functionality is the existence of 'ghost' teachers and teacher absenteeism which was explained by the participants in FGDs and KIIs as follows: First, building schools and hiring teachers is done mostly due to political decisions ie to create employment in their constituencies. Once hired on political grounds, teachers have the patronage of the politicians and education officials have not been able to make them accountable for performance or even attending school. Second, government teachers are often among the few educated people in villages and politicians involve them in their political campaigns.

Figure 9: Relationship between DEOs' visits and Attendance of Teachers and Students in Sample Schools for the Period 2016-23



#### Children with Special Needs in the project districts

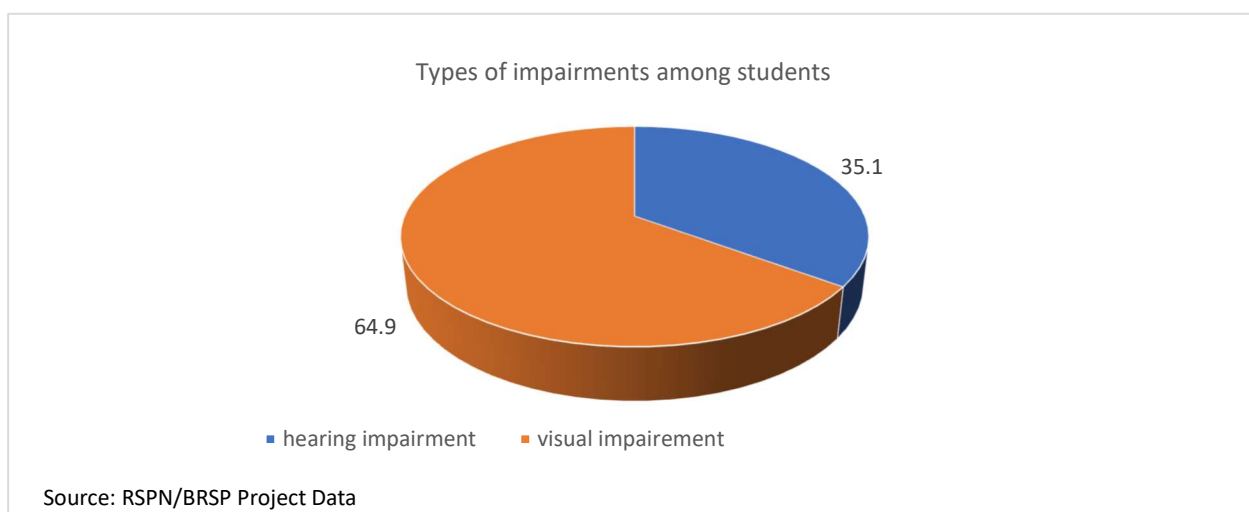
The ECW project is designed to ensure the inclusion of children with special needs in formal and non-formal education. However, there are major challenges pertaining to their inclusion. Despite a comprehensive Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act being in place, there is only one special school in the provincial headquarter of Quetta. Mainstream schools do not have infrastructure or facilities in place to integrate children with special needs. At the community level, due to the lack of services for children with special needs, their needs are highly de-prioritised. During a field visit, it was observed that the community or parents are not sensitive to the needs of these children and fail to advocate for them since it is not a priority. There is a lack of awareness among community members, parents, and teachers about understanding and responding to the needs of special children. When probed about

keeping children with special needs out of school, the parents responded that due to the lack of available facilities and social stigma around disability, their children are more protected and better taken care of at home.

The project needs to consider such ground realities to ensure a meaningful inclusion of children with special needs. There seems to be a misalignment between the project document and the actual situation in the field.

The implementing partner, BRSP, under the ECW project hired the services of a health-consulting firm to screen children in schools and identify children with special needs and provide them assistive devices. A total of 151 out of 473 children (31.9%) screened in the project districts were found to have needs for visual and hearing devices. Out of 151 children, 98 children (64.9%) have difficulty in seeing and 53 children (35%) have difficulty in hearing. These 151 children have been provided assistive devices to better integrate them into classrooms.

Figure 10: Types of Impairments Among Students in Schools (%)



The analysis of the screening data reflects the following.

In district Loralai out of 275 children screened, 85 (31%) children were found, having special needs. Out of 85 students, 32 (38%) required assistive devices for hearing ie hearing aids, and 53 (62%) needed visual aids ie spectacles. In district Panjgur, out of 119 children screened, 41 (34%) were found with special needs including 31 (76%) children requiring visual aid and 10 (24%) children requiring hearing aids. Out of 79 children screened in district Kohlu, 25 (32%) children were found having special needs, including 14 (56%) children requiring visual aids and 11 (44%) children requiring hearing aids.

#### Challenges to Non-Formal Education

The project works on both formal and non-formal education aiming to increase the enrolment of out of school children in formal government schools through community outreach and strengthening social support networks including the Parent Teachers School Management Committees (PTSMCs).

In the non-formal education component, the project aims to capacitate out of school children, especially girls, children with special needs and Afghan refugee children to integrate into mainstream schools in future. There are two types of non-formal education facilities offered under the project.

- (i) Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centres in government schools for children and youth of the ages 9-18 years.
- (ii) Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centres in Afghan refugee camps/villages.

### Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP)

The ALP is designed for children and youth that are unable to enrol in the formal system due to having missing primary years of schooling. These include out of school children and school dropouts. The ALP consists of two levels i) primary (grades 1-5) and ii) middle (grades 6-8). Primary level ALP course span over three years. There are three levels of assessments out of which two are internal (within the ALP centres), conducted by the schoolteachers and project staff, while the third assessment is external and to be done by the Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission. Those who pass the three assessments will be eligible to take admission in sixth grade in the formal government education schools. Middle level ALP is 18-20 months course. The middle level ALP prepares students to take examination of grade 9 and 10 of the Board of Secondary Education.

The ALP uses the JICA curriculum approved by the Government of Balochistan for primary grades. The teachers at the ALP centres are hired and trained by the District Education Department in coordination with the Provincial Institute of Teachers Education (PITE). The project also provided an exam registration fee to girls who register for grades 9 and 10 examinations. This ensures that the youth graduates through a formal examination system and integrate into formal, higher education schools. Table 7 present the district wise number of ALP centres and enrolment.

Table 7: District wise ALP centres and children enrolled as of November 2023

District	Number of Primary Level ALP centres established	Enrolment		
		Boys	Girls	Total
Loralai	88	2,050	2,233	4,283
Panjgur	41	208	563	771
Kohlu	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	129	2,258	2,796	5,054

Source: RSPN/BRSP Project Data

Based on observation and focus group discussions with community members, the key issues pertaining to the ALP centres include the following.

1. The government of Balochistan and the District Education Departments have decided that the ALP centres should be run in government school buildings, as a second shift ie after regular, formal classes end. Although this is a good suggestion, the following issues stem from it:
  - (i) The target for the ALP centres is out of school children. Most of these children have remained out of school due to long distances from their homes to the school. Running the ALP centres in the same government schools means that the issue of accessibility remains unaddressed for the most deserving children. The project has opened 129 primary level ALP centres in district Loralai and Panjgur, where a total of 5,054 learners (55 percent girls) have been enrolled against the target of 9,543 children. 88 of these centres are in district Loralai and 41 are in Panjgur. In Kohlu the selection of schools was delayed, and ALP centres could not be opened yet.
  - (ii) The ALP centres should have the same facilities for students that regular, formal schools do. For example, proper infrastructure, WASH facilities and psychosocial support facilities. However, many government schools lack basic infrastructure, and with the project scope being limited in this area, it does not help resolve these infrastructural needs, resulting in major discrepancies in project design and the implementation of this component.
2. The middle level ALP programme has huge challenges. So far only 7 middle level ALPs have been opened in Loralai with a total enrolment of 222 learners (184 girls and 38 boys) compared to the target of 9,651 learners. The following are the key reasons for this slow progress:

- (i) Enrolment in middle level ALP centres requires a primary school certificate. Since most out of school children do not have this certificate or cannot easily get their certificates from the schools they left long ago, they cannot be enrolled.
  - (ii) There is no government approved curriculum available for middle level ALPs in Balochistan. The project team reports that there is an ongoing consultation with JICA, the Government of Balochistan's Social Welfare Department (the custodian of non-formal education) and the School Education Department to approve the middle level ALP curriculum designed by JICA. Meanwhile, the government education authorities have asked the project team to use the regular middle school curriculum taught in formal schools, instead of the JICA ALP curriculum. This is causing a deviation from the objective and design of the overall accelerated learning programme. Secondly, the books for the middle level are not available and have not been provided to the learners. Thirdly, the regular, formal curriculum will need trained teachers to teach the curriculum and the currently hired teachers hired for the ALP curriculum are not trained to teach the formal curriculum.
  - (iii) The project has set a teacher-student ratio of 78 students per classroom, with one teacher teaching all 78. Neither are there students available and nor is it advisable to have this ratio as it is unmanageable. Moreover, government classrooms do not have sufficient space to accommodate such a big number of students in one classroom.
3. Teachers hired for ALP (both primary and middle) reported that their contracts have not been shared with them and salaries have not been paid for the last 4 months. The project team says that documents needed prepare contracts and to process payments are not complete and salaries cannot be processed.

Some challenges in the project design include:

- (i) The project is currently designed to run only one batch of ALP learners for three years at the primary level and 18 months at the middle level. However, it is unclear how enrolment will be managed annually and what happens after the completion of the specified time periods. There is no clear plan to continue run ALPs except the first batch.
- (ii) A primary concern expressed by parents and communities is the hesitation to send their children to government schools and ALP centres due to a lack of basic facilities and the perceived low quality of education.
- (iii) Even with free education with books provided, out-of-school children often contribute to their families' incomes through labour or assist their parents in various chores (especially girls). Due to the perceived lack of long-term returns or benefits of education, there is little interest in sending children to these Centres, especially older ones who help out at home.

#### Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centres

Access to Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres for children of ages 3-5 years is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goal to encourage participation of children in organised learning prior to enrolment in formal schools. This prepares children to attend school regularly, fosters social skills and encourages them to continue their education. Under the project, one room in a primary government school is designated as an ECE centre. The district wise number of ECE centres and their enrolment are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: District wise number of ECE centres and enrolment in the project districts as of November 2023

District	Number of ECE centres	Enrolment		
		Boy	Girls	Total
Loralai	53	1,378	1,576	2,954
Panjgur	32	504	594	1,098
Grand Total	48	1,882	2,170	4,052

Source: RSPN/BRSP Project Data

Based on observations and focus group discussions with the community, key findings pertaining to the ECE centres are identified below:

1. The setting up of ECE centres in primary government schools at least ensures that the materials provided in the ECE centres will stay there once the project ends. But to sustain the ECE centres the government needs to adopt the ECE teachers. In addition, children's familiarity with the school they are in will make their transition to primary education easier.
2. It was observed that there was a high number of children that attended the ECE centres. One of the reasons for high enrolment is that parents prefer to send children of ages 3-5 years to school where they can be looked after. Young children are unable to help parents with household chores. With large families, parents find it easier to manage with smaller children being in school. Younger children in ECE compared to older, middle ALP are thus many more due to older children working at home.
3. It was also observed that the ECE centres were well decorated and were equipped with basic education materials that attracted the children to school. It was observed that the teachers hired by the project for the ECEs were young female from the local areas and tried their best to engage children effectively.
4. The idea behind the ECE centres is to involve children in play/activity-based learning. The ECE centres need to follow more activity-based teaching methods. However, the children reported that they enjoy coming to school.
5. There is a set criteria and numbers for the equipment and materials to be provided to each ECE centre. Although there are sufficient Project resources, these are not allocated based on need. An example of this was found in district Panjgur where the number of students in the classroom was more than the target number but enough floor mats were not provided because the target was to provide only one floor mat per school.

#### Accelerated Learning Centres for Afghan refugees

The ALP centres for Afghan refugees are set up in refugee villages for children and youth of the ages 9-18 years. The ALP has two levels i) primary (grades 1-5) and ii) middle (grades 6-8). After the completion of each level, the student is provided a certificate to graduate to the next level. The middle level prepares students to take Board examinations for grades 9 and 10. Youth is provided an exam registration fee by the Project. This ensures that youth graduates through a formal examination system and integrates into formal, higher education schools. The ALP centres in refugee villages are set up in community allocated spaces. The usual practice is to allocate a room in an accessible place, that is, mostly a room in a community member's house. The ALP in refugee villages is to enrol Afghan refugee children that are either out of school or have dropped out of UNHCR schools in these villages. Under the RSPN-ECW project BRSP has opened 13 ALP centres for Afghan refugees in the refugee villages in district Loralai where 546 children (64% girls) are enrolled. There are no Afghan refugee villages in the other two Project districts. Observations and data collected pertaining to Afghan refugees include the following:

1. The community spaces allocated to run ALP centres for Afghan refugee children were small, overcrowded, and had no proper ventilation or washroom facilities for girls or boys.
2. It was observed that there is a significant demand for enrolment of Afghan refugee children with an average of 45 children enrolled in each ALP centre. The parents and community members are sensitised and willing to send their children to school. The major reason for children staying out of school or eventually dropping out is that the UNHCR schools are not in their proximity.
3. The community members and teachers also shared that a significant number of children have dropped out of these centres due to the recent 'forced repatriation' of Afghan refugees by the Government of Pakistan. Some Afghan children in schools said that some of their peers have left and gone back to Afghanistan. However, none of the respondents spoke of their experience in detail due to the sensitivity of the issue.

The consultant noticed that there was an underlying fear to respond and report on this. According to the Project data, 69 children (34 girls and 35 boys) have left Project supported schools as of November 2023.

4. The Proof of Registration (PoR) cards are valid until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023<sup>20</sup>. PoR cards is an identity document for registered Afghan refugees that allows them to legally reside in Pakistan. PoR cards verified by NADRA enables Afghan refugees to open a bank account, rent a home, obtain cell phone SIM and is usually accepted to enrol Afghan refugees in public schools in Pakistan and for Afghan students to take Board examinations. However, due to the lack of a clear policy or government notification/directives from the Government to the Education Departments, some schools do not recognise PoR card holders and others do not enrol them if PoR cards are not updated. Thus, advocacy with the government is required to provide a clear policy and directives to the Education Departments to ensure inclusion of Afghan refugee children in public schools.
5. Accessing data on the education of Afghan refugee children is not easy. At present, the UNHCR and other UN agencies are collaborating with the Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education to integrate data on Afghan children into the overall education MIS.
6. According to the representatives of UNHCR, UNHCR Pakistan is operating a total of 142 schools out of which 35 are in Balochistan. In Pakistan, the schools provide free primary, secondary and, in some areas, higher secondary (up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade) education to a total of 56,000 children in 54 refugees villages mostly in Balochistan and KP provinces. A total of 1300 teachers work in these schools including 95 percent Afghan refugee teachers. The teachers are trained through the government's Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE). In district Loralai the UNHCR is working in three Refugees Villages where it has six schools. The enrolment status in these schools is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Enrolment of Afghan Students in Loralai Refugees Village Schools of UNHCR, November 2023

Refugees Villages	Gross Primary Class K-8			Gross Secondary Class 9-12			Total Enrolment		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
Ghazgi Minara	257	507	764	8	21	29	265	528	793
Zarkarez	566	811	1,377	0	16	16	566	827	1,393
Katwai	508	726	1,234	6	23	29	514	749	1,263
Total	1,331	2,044	3,375	14	60	74	1,345	2,104	3,449

Source: UNHCR office Baluchistan, Pakistan

In addition, UNHCR also supports about one thousand out-of-school girls through its Accelerated Learning Programme and Home-Based Primary Schools Programme in Baluchistan and KP. Around seven hundred children in KP attend government schools with UNHCR's Cash Based Incentive. UNHCR also provides scholarships to Afghan refugee youth to access tertiary education in Pakistani universities through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugees Initiative Programme, since 1992. Currently six hundred students are using this facility with a total of three thousand students having benefited from this Programme.

UNHCR's education strategy focuses on inclusion and integration of refugee children into Pakistan's public education systems, with the objective of their peaceful co-existence with Pakistanis. In 2019 UNHCR replaced the Afghan Curriculum for Afghan students, replacing it with Pakistan's Single National Curriculum. Initially it was planned to introduce the curriculum class-wise but later it was decided to introduce it in all classes at once. Some of the challenges faced due to the adoption of the Pakistani curriculum are identified below:

<sup>20</sup> Notification Number No.F.4(4)-RR/2021, Government of Pakistan, Ministry of State and Frontier Regions dated Islamabad the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2023.

1. The Afghan curriculum was in Pashtu and Dari languages while the Single National Curriculum of Pakistan is designed and implemented in English and Urdu. This change in language has resulted in a major language barrier for Afghan students and teachers alike. Since 95 percent of the teachers in the refugee schools are also Afghan refugees, they do not speak English or Urdu.
2. There are limitations and capacity gaps among teachers that UNHCR aims to bridge through training and capacity building. However, the current gap in capacity due to shifting from the Afghan curriculum to the Pakistani one is affecting the quality of education.
3. Before the adoption of the Pakistani curriculum the Afghan refugee students were required to acquire an equivalency certificate from the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC)<sup>21</sup> to be enrolled in Pakistani schools. Since the adoption of the Pakistani curriculum, this requirement is no longer applicable. This makes the enrolment of Afghan refugee children in Pakistani schools easier. However, the policy still applies to the earlier students i.e. prior to 2019.

The UNHCR schools are run as private schools and need to be registered with provincial Education Foundations. In addition, all High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools need to be affiliated with respective Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) as well. Thus, these schools need support from UNHCR staff in the registration process. The UNHCR representatives from Islamabad pointed out that UNHCR is only able to cater to 20 percent of Afghan refugees in education. Thus, there exists a huge unmet need that the Government, development partners, civil society organisations and donors should focus on and address.

The UNHCR representative from Quetta highlighted that unavailability of telecom infrastructure to provide internet in schools and the unavailability of teachers to run science and computer labs in schools in Balochistan.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from the review of policy documents, data and field work highlights a stark contrast between policies on paper and their weak or non-existent implementation. The root causes of poor implementation are multifaceted, encompassing issues such as lack of political will, structural barriers involving poor fund allocation/utilisation, inadequate need-based planning plus the levels of awareness in communities and the overall security situation in the Province.

Balochistan has the lowest literacy rate at 46% (Female:29% and Male: 61%) and highest proportion of out-of-schoolchildren at 47% (Girls: 59% and Boys: 38%) as compared to other provinces of Pakistan (Sindh 44%, KP 32% and Punjab 24%)<sup>22</sup>. Overall, in Pakistan, one third of the school age children are not in school. The out-of-schoolchildren include those who never attended school and those who have dropped out after enrolment. There is high dropout rate among girls in Baluchistan. In 2021-22, a total of 484,029 girls were enrolled in schools. Among them, the primary section had the highest enrolment rate at 76%, but there was a sharp decline to 16% in the middle section. Additionally, the secondary section comprised only 7% of the total enrolment, while the higher secondary section accounted for just 0.98%<sup>23</sup>. The dropout rate among girls, attributed to various factors such as domestic responsibilities, cultural restrictions, early marriages, and (unsafe) travel distances. Gender disparities persist in terms of girls' enrolment, with structural issues evident in resource allocation for middle and secondary girls' schools. The lack of educational options beyond the primary level is a significant barrier to girls' continued education.

Poverty remains a predominant challenge, with children engaged in labour being a significant reason for out-of-school girls and their dropout. The perceived low quality of formal and informal education by parents diminishes the

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<sup>21</sup> IBCC is a federal body of Pakistan that deals with the standardisation of examination, assessment, evaluation at secondary and higher secondary school levels through coordination along with recognition of local and foreign qualifications.

<sup>22</sup> Economic Survey of Pakistan 2022-23

<sup>23</sup> Balochistan Education Statistics 2021-22



long-term impact of education in their eyes. While a free education policy is mandated by law, the unavailability of books and uniforms for all children is a discouraging factor for children to attend school.

Teacher absenteeism correlates directly with student absenteeism, emphasising the need for regular monitoring of teachers and addressing this issue urgently. While the BEMIS-Real Time Monitoring System offers comprehensive and relevant data, this data is not used to take necessary actions.

While Pakistan's commendable efforts in hosting Afghan refugees is recognised, the lack of a clear refugee policy and the announcement of the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan', effective from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023, poses significant challenges, impacting the education of Afghan children, particularly older girls who have had to return to Afghanistan, with no education facilities for them due to the policy of the Afghan, Taliban's de facto government.

Despite the recognition of the PoR card in various sectors, including banking, telecommunication and health, there exists an ambiguity in the education system regarding the acceptance of PoR card holders ie their enrolment in schools and their taking Board examinations in some schools. Some schools and policy makers were not even clear about enrolling unregistered Afghan children, until the Repatriation Plan was put in place. Additionally, the absence of a legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers creates confusion and limitations for long-term planning.

The Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act contains commendable provisions, but weak implementation hinders inclusive education.

The challenges faced in the implementation of the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) includes issues of accessibility due to ALP centres being located in government schools, discrepancies between project design and related infrastructure limitations, generally slow progress by the Project, and obstacles in establishing middle-level ALP centres, including enrolment constraints, middle level curriculum approval delays, and concerns regarding teachers' contracts and salary disbursement.

Inadequate facilities in government schools and the lack of priority given to education by most communities highlights the need for a comprehensive reassessment and realignment of the project's strategies to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

The Project's limited duration is a concern. With challenges faced in Balochistan, this needs to be revisited if its targets are to be achieved.

In summary, addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and coordinated effort, encompassing political will, structural reforms, targeted resource allocation, and a needs-based approach to implementation. It is crucial to bridge the gap between policy formulation and effective on-the-ground implementation to ensure equitable and inclusive education for all.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1. Policy Recommendations for Government

1. The government of Balochistan has developed comprehensive strategies for inclusive education. It is time to implement these policies on the ground. Education authorities need the support of political parties to implement these policies with effective resource allocation and utilisation. A stronger political commitment to reform is critical. Political support to the Education bureaucracy's efforts to ensure that teachers fulfil their responsibility of attending school and conducting classes is key. It is crucial to eliminate ghost teachers from the system by implementing action. The Real Time Monitoring System of BEMIS provides necessary data to do this. Similarly political commitment and influence is needed to support the infrastructure needs

of schools. The comprehensive data available on the BEMIS can be used more effectively to make key policy decisions and resource allocations.

2. Establish mechanisms for regular monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation, addressing issues such as fund utilisation, teacher availability, and infrastructure development.
3. Implement accountability measures to ensure political will translates into effective action, emphasising the importance of education in addressing broader societal challenges.
4. Develop targeted programmes to address the specific challenges faced by girls in education, implement laws that discourage early marriages and promote the importance of girls' education, address child labour, provide safe transportation, and general incentives to keep girls in school.
5. Develop a clear, long-term plan for Afghan refugees in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, ensuring sustained support for education and addressing concerns surrounding repatriation.
6. Establish clear guidelines and issue directives to all schools and education departments for recognising PoR cards, ensuring registration and enrolment of Afghan refugee children.
7. Collaborate with relevant authorities to disseminate information on the validity of PoR cards for educational purposes.
8. Allocate resources strategically, focusing on building and supporting middle and secondary girls' schools to bridge the gender gap.
9. Implement measures to ensure the availability of books and uniforms for all students on time.
10. Invest in teacher training programmes and incentive structures to reduce absenteeism and improve the overall quality of education.
11. Increase awareness and understanding of the Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act, providing training to educators and administrators.
12. Put in place relevant structures in schools to ensure access for persons/children with special needs.
13. Approve the middle level ALP curriculum developed by JICA and allow the Project team to use it in current middle level ALP centres.

## 6.2. Project Recommendations for RSPN and BRSP

The scale of the education crisis in Balochistan is enormous and any small-scale investment needs to be used strategically with a clear vision and objective to achieve specific outcomes that are impactful and long-lasting. The Project design document rightly identifies all the issues that children, especially those who are marginalised, face in Balochistan. For example, Afghan refugees, persons with special needs and people living in poverty. All three categories have their unique circumstances and require specific sets of interventions. Similarly, interventions at different levels of the school system (ECE, ALP and regular schooling) have their own challenges. The RSPN/BRSP may revisit the Project design with the following focus:

1. Priorities target groups and level of schooling and focus on interventions with a clear objective of achieving outcomes.
2. Reallocate resources according to the needs of the schools and children enrolled in the schools.
3. For ALPs in the refugee camps, coordinate with UNHCR and establish proper school spaces with adequate sitting spaces, toilets, and wash facilities.
4. For ALPs in government schools, coordinate with government and install required infrastructure facilities according to the needs of children.
5. It may be better to focus on primary level ALPs until the barriers for middle level ALPs are resolved.
6. For both ECEs and ALPs, a clear strategy needs to be agreed with the government to integrate students into the regular education system after the completion of the Project and for the continuation of the ECE centres.
7. Resources in the ECE centre need be replenished with time and teachers need continuous training.
8. For children with special needs either this component needs to be dropped from the project or should be implemented in coordination with the special education department of the government and other specialised organisation with allocation more funds.

9. Provide teachers' salaries on time.
10. Engage a technical person to evaluate the capacities of teachers and invest in teachers training more effectively.
11. Collaborate with other livelihood projects of BRSP and other NGOs and local communities to create income-generating opportunities for families to reduce child labour and emphasising the long-term benefits of education for breaking the cycle of poverty.
12. Advocate for the development of a legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers, aligning it with international standards and ensuring long-term planning commitments from the government.

#### Annex - I: List of document and reference literature reviewed.

1. ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) Pakistan 2022 – 2024. Project design document
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16. Baloch Children Turn Away from Education, Claim It Does Not Feed Their Families. Article by Maqsood , Ali Jan. The Friday Times , March 4, 2023. Accessed from <https://thefridaytimes.com/04-Mar-2023/baloch-c.hildren-turn-away-from-education-claim-it-does-not-feed-their-families>

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18. PARENT SPECIAL EDUCATION INFORMATION. *PACER, Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs*. (blog), n.d. accessed on 20 Nov 2023 from <https://www.pacer.org/parent/dropout-prevention/>

## Annex – II: Details of meeting, discussion with people met and schools visited.

### A. Meeting and discussions with LSOs and Community Groups

<i>Date</i>	<i>FGD type and Location</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>Gender of FGD Participants</i>
Nov 20, 2023	Meeting and discussion with community members of Afghan refugees at Zhar Karez refugees camp, Haji Khalo, Union Council Shah Karez, District Loralai	15	Men
	Meeting and discussion with community members of Afghan refugees at Katwai refugees camp 2, Ghulam Hazrat Jam, Union Council Bawar	10	Men
	Meeting and discussion with representatives of LSO Mushtarka, and Community Resources Persons at Union Council Ponga, District Loralai	8	Men
Nov 21, 2023	Meeting and discussion with representatives of LSO Ittehad, Community Resources Persons and School Teachers at Union Council Lahore, District Loralai	10	Men
Nov 22, 2023	Meeting and discussion with Headmaster and School Teachers at Government Boys High School Oryani, District Kohlu	12	Men
Nov 25, 2023	Meeting and discussion with representatives of LSO Essai, Waja Hasil Khan, Union Council Tasp, District Panjgur	15	Men
Dec 8, 2023	FGD with members women community members of Village Organisation Waheedullah at Colony Sordo, Union Council Sordo, District Panjgur.	10	Women
Dec 5, 2023	FGD with teachers and schoolgirls at Girls Middle School Faisalabad, Union Council Oryani, District Kohlu	10	Women
Nov 25, 2023	FGD with women community members at Essai, District Panjgur	10	Women
Nov 25, 2023	FGD with women community members in Loralai	8	Women
Nov 25, 2023	FGD with women community members in Loralai	10	Women
Nov 25, 2023	FGD with women of Afghan refugees in Loralai	9	Women
Nov 25, 2023	FGD with women of Afghan refugees in Loralai	9	Women

B. List of Schools visited, interacted with teacher and students.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description of Schools</i>
Nov 20, 2023	Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centre for children of Afghan refugees at Zhar Karez refugees camp, Haji Khalo, Union Council Shah Karez, District Loralai
	Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centre for children of Afghan refugees at Katwai refugees camp 2, Ghulam Hazrat Jam, Union Council Bawar
Nov 21, 2023	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centre at Government Boys Primary School Khair, District Loralai
	Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centre primary, Government Boys Primary School, Haji Sher Muhammad, District Loralai
	Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centre primary (co-ed) and middle (Girls), Government Boys Primary School, Khandai Qadeem, District Loralai
Nov 22, 2023	Government Girls Primary School, Sher Jan Churmai, District Kohlu
Nov 25, 2023	Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centre at Government Girls Primary School Dal Niazabad, Panjgur
	Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) centre primary (Girls), at Government Girls Primary School, Saeedabad, District Panjgur

C. Meeting and Discussion with Government Officials and UNHCR representatives

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description of Participants</i>
Nov 20, 2023	Mr. Jamal ud Din, Deputy District Education Officer, Loralai
Nov 22, 2023	Mr. Hafeez Ullah Mari, District Education Officer, Kohlu
	Mr. Jaffar Zarkoon, District Officer Education, Kohlu
Nov 22, 2023	Mr. Arbab Talib, Commissioner Afghan Refugees, Provincial Commissionerate, Balochistan
Nov 22, 2023	Mr. Sami Kakar, Additional Secretary, School Education Department, Government of Balochistan
Nov 25, 2023	Mr. Muhammad Jan, District Education Officer, Panjgur
	Ms. Sabeeha Khaanam, District Education Officer, Panjgur
Dec 1, 2023	Ms. Shahida Sultan, Education Advisor, UNHCR, Islamabad
	Ms. Noreen Sahar, UNHCR Office, Balochistan

Meeting and Discussion with BRSP and RSPN Team

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description of Participants</i>
Nov 17, 2023	Inception meeting with the RSPN Project Team
Nov 20, 2023	Discussion with female project staff members of BRSP district Loralai
Nov 22, 2023	Discussion with female project staff members of BRSP district Kohlu
Nov 22, 2023	Meeting and discussion with project staff members of BRSP and COO BRSP head office Quetta
Nov 25, 2023	Meeting and discussion with female project staff members of BRSP district Panjgur
Nov 29, 2023	Meeting and discussion with CEO, COO, and project staff members RSPN
Dec 18, 2023	Presentation of the findings at the Annual Review Workshop of the project to RSPN/BRSP Management and Project team at Islamabad

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