

# DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE PAKISTAN

Volume 7, Issue 1



**Empowering our Youth**



# DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE PAKISTAN

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



Norwegian Embassy  
*Islamabad*





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*Development Advocate Pakistan* provides a platform for the exchange of ideas on key development issues and challenges in Pakistan. Focusing on a specific development theme in each edition, this quarterly publication fosters public discourse and presents varying perspectives from civil society, academia, government and development partners. The publication makes an explicit effort to include the voices of women and youth in the ongoing discourse. A combination of analysis and public opinion articles promote and inform debate on development ideas while presenting up-to-date information.

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#### Printed by:

Agha Jee Printers, Islamabad

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ISBN: 978-969-8736-30-20

The issue has received significant overall support from the UNDP Youth Empowerment Team including, Ms. Laura Sheridan (Programme Specialist), Ms. Fatima Ahmed (Policy and Advocacy Officer), Ms. Maryam Inam (Communications Officer) and Ms. Kiran Mansoor (Admin and Finance Associate)

March 2020

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# Acknowledgements



Australian Government

## Australian High Commission, Islamabad

“Australia is proud to partner with the UN Development Programme to deliver the Youth Empowerment Programme. Australia recognises the crucial role young people play in solving the economic, security and development challenges of our time. With 64 percent of Pakistan's population under the age of 30, there is an opportunity to harness this demographic dividend and ensure that young people are empowered to shape the country's future direction. Australia has long been supporting Pakistani youth vulnerable to violence and conflict, particularly women and girls. Our cooperation on education is another example, giving young Pakistanis the skills to contribute to sustainable and inclusive development. We are also pleased to be part of this publication, which promotes inspiring and positive stories about the achievement of young people in Pakistan, shares new research and data, and looks to the role young people will play in a post-pandemic Pakistan. I look forward to continuing to engage with the vibrant youth of Pakistan.”

H.E. Dr Geoffrey Shaw  
Australian High Commissioner



Norwegian Embassy  
Islamabad

## Royal Norwegian Embassy, Islamabad

Norway recognizes and values the vital role young people play as agents of change in their communities. Youth are not only the future, but an important resource here and now. At the same time, we know that too many young women and men lack access to quality education, meaningful employment and leadership opportunities. Inclusive and active participation is essential to ensure that the voices of youth are heard and their development needs met. Therefore, Norway is proud to have partnered with UNDP to raise awareness, promote diversity and increase youth participation in Pakistani society.



## United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Pakistan

UNFPA, as a global organization committed to the rights of young people, offers investments that can help countries with a large population of young people like Pakistan, accelerate sustainable development and reap demographic dividends. Every individual has the right to make informed choices about their body and life. A single choice to stay in school may protect against early pregnancy, gender based violence and child marriage. In Pakistan, 29 percent of women were married before 18 years of age. The health consequences of teenage girls giving birth reveal that the survival status of pregnancies of women aged less than or equal to 18, stands at 18 percent, compared with 15 percent for women aged 19-24. The socio-economic consequences leading to child marriage are further compounded by the COVID-19 outbreak, with poverty being the key contributing factor in the aftermath; families are more likely to marry off daughters in times of economic stress to alleviate the perceived burden of caring for them. It is, therefore, essential to continue sensitizing communities on the negative and detrimental effects of child marriage, especially health complications of early childbearing, and advocate for legislative measures and law enforcement mechanisms.



## Empowering our Youth

Investing in young people can be a nation's most strategic investment. If provided with necessary opportunities such as quality education, gainful employment, meaningful engagement, good mental and physical health, and marketable skills, youth can gain the ability and authority to make well-informed decisions to improve their and their family's well-being. Empowered youth can not only achieve great heights for themselves but can also positively impact society at large.

Fortunately, Pakistan is young and will continue to remain young for at least another decade. With more than 68 percent of its population below the age of 30 years, investment in youth empowerment ought to be a top priority in Pakistan. Unless this demographic dividend is transformed and leveraged into a positive one, Pakistan will be at risk of leaving more young people further behind and will not be able to meet the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda.

But the current human development indicators for Pakistan's youth do not present a very promising picture. Nearly 30 percent of youth are illiterate and nearly 77 percent quit education and began working for financial reasons. The national education budget remains at 2.3 percent of the GDP. Adding to this is the youth unemployment rate at 5.79 percent. Youth make up 36.9 percent of Pakistan's total labour force: currently, there are more people in the working age (15 to 64) than there are those who are older (65+), or children (<15). Almost 4 million youth attain working age every year, compared to the 1 million jobs added per annum. Finally, share of Pakistani youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) stands at 30.96 percent (percent of youth population). Ninety percent youth have no access to recreational facilities (libraries, cinemas, parks etc.). In terms of access to media, information and communication technologies, 48 percent own a mobile, 15 percent have access to the Internet, 8 percent have access to radio, and 68 percent have access to television.

Therefore, there are already several challenges the country faces with regards to youth. Unfortunately, with the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges have increased. Aside from adverse economic and political effect in Pakistan and worldwide, the pandemic has led to an unprecedented impact on education systems all over world, translating into massive social consequences on youth. As of April 2020, 191 countries including Pakistan, had to call for a nationwide or localized school closure to prevent the spread of the virus. This means almost 91 percent of the total enrolled students in the world or 1.5 billion people, had to face disruptions to their education of an uncertain duration. In Pakistan, 42 million school-going are facing discontinuation of education due to COVID-19.

As young people form the biggest segment of the society in Pakistan, their contribution can be immense in reducing the spread and fighting COVID-19. They can act as agents of change through being educated about the virus and then acting as instruments of dissemination. Creating awareness is a key role they can play, given they can optimally utilize digital media, especially in the current circumstances. The government of Pakistan has created a COVID-19 Tiger Force to benefit from the youth dividend and engage them for COVID-19 response. This awareness raising can be extended to the macro level through youth being engaged with different groups and organizations that have the ability to reach out to the masses. The youth can also actively participate as workers, managers and entrepreneurs to support the economic recovery, by innovating and finding solutions to the problems arising from the ongoing crisis, through the creation of new products and services using technology and other platforms.

The federal and provincial governments have taken several steps for youth participation and empowerment over the years. These have included introducing youth friendly policies and initiatives, such as loan and laptop awarding schemes, internship programs, financial funds, entrepreneurship initiatives, vocational training programs, several skills and leadership trainings.

The most notable is the Kamyab Jawan-National Youth Development Program (2019-2023), launched by the federal government, with support from several UN agencies. The program addresses six thematic areas for federal-provincial collaboration including, 1) Mainstreaming of Marginalized Youth; 2) Economic Empowerment; 3) Civic Engagement; 4) Social Protection; 5) Health and Wellbeing; and 6) Youth-focused Institutional Reforms.

Such investments in the youth are crucial to ensure their skills are adequately utilized and the dividends reaped. With the current pandemic shifting the mode of work from physical to digital, it has become even more important that the youth are equipped to transition to a digital economy so Pakistan can compete with the world for service provision and technical expertise.

In Pakistan's socio-economic context and youth demography, the government's youth empowerment and development initiatives will need to be flexible and capable of keeping up with a high-wired youth that is fast, sharp and politically opinionated. This will also direct future youth programming in the country that will not only implement pre-determined agendas, but will also be smart and flexible enough to effectively respond to emerging realities as well as global crises, that have not been factored in.



**Analysis**

# **Empowering our Youth**

**THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

## Leveraging Pakistan's High-Intensity Youth Quotient

**Note: Main Analysis has been conducted by Ms. Ammara Durrani, a polymath professional with 19 years of experience in public, private and international development sectors. She led UNDP Pakistan's technical assistance to the Government of Pakistan for formulation of Kamyab Jawan National Youth Empowerment Program. Currently visiting faculty at School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.**

*"One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. Every society has its protectors of status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. Today, our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change."*—

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### Youth Empowerment: Mainstreaming a Development Idea

#### NHDR as Game Changer for Pakistan

When UNDP launched its Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017: Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan, it caused a stir in the policy, media, economic and development practice communities.<sup>1</sup> Not because the subject was new, but because of the report's timing and content—a full-spectrum sustainable development idea and data repository launched via high visibility with the strategic objective to inform and shape new public policy.<sup>2</sup>

Its message was loud and clear: as the fifth most populous and one of the youngest countries in the world (second youngest in South Asia after Afghanistan), 21st century Pakistan is facing a fundamental reality of an unprecedented demographic dividend—a youth bulge. Unless this demographic dividend is not transformed and leveraged into a positive one, Pakistan will be at risk of leaving

more young people further behind and never meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Released in April 2018, NHDR's timing was optimal for two key reasons.

First, after almost two decades of fighting a war on terror that incurred enormous socio-political and economic costs, Pakistan was finally turning a page in achieving relative peace and security. According to government estimates of 2018-2019, more than 74,000 Pakistani people (civilian and law enforcement) were killed and the country bore a cost of nearly USD 128 billion in economic losses.<sup>3</sup> For Pakistan's policy community, the country's direct experience of terrorism and militancy had already centralized a national security question about the future of poorer, un(der)educated, un(der)skilled, un(der)engaged and un(der)represented youth caught in the trap of violent extremism, and what could possibly be offered to them as better and socio-economically constructive alternatives.

Second, Pakistan was moving towards relative political stability with a third consecutive democratic transition in a decade. Ahead lay the 2018 general elections in Pakistan that were predicted as a game-changer with an unprecedented registered youth vote bank estimated at 44 percent of the electorate.<sup>4</sup> Thus, NHDR provided an exciting reference point and a youth-focused manifesto for political parties contesting

the elections.

Using government statistics mainly from 2015-2017, the report offered startling evidence as a baseline for the need for policy action.<sup>5</sup> A population of 207.7 million, 68 percent of Pakistanis are below the age of 30, and 27 percent are aged between 15-29 years.<sup>6</sup> Currently, it has the largest generation of young people ever recorded in national history. For the next three decades, Pakistan will continue to have a population structure that will be predominantly young—a demographic trend critical to its future development and economic growth.

In contrast, however, the human development indicators for Pakistan's youth present an abysmal picture. Nearly 30 percent of youth are illiterate. Approximately 22.6 million children are out of school, and 70 percent have never attended an educational institution. The National Education Policy 2009 required Pakistan to increase the expenditure on education to seven percent of the GDP by 2015, but the national education budget remains at 2.3 percent of GDP. At a net enrollment growth rate of less than one percent, Pakistan will need another sixty years to achieve the target of 'zero out-of-school children'. Nearly 77 percent youth quit education and begin working for financial reasons.

The threat is compounded by Pakistan's high unemployment rate recorded at 6.24 percent in 2016.<sup>7</sup> Youth make up 42 percent of Pakistan's total labour force

1. UNDP Pakistan (2018), "Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017: Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan." Available at <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/human-development-reports/PKNHDR.html>

2. For earlier seminal studies of the state of youth in Pakistan, see: Sathar, Zeba A. et. al., "Youth in Pakistan: Priorities, Realities and Policy Responses", The Population Council and The David & Lucile Packard Foundation (2016). Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316285501\\_Youth\\_in\\_Pakistan\\_Priorities\\_Realities\\_and\\_Policy\\_Responses](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316285501_Youth_in_Pakistan_Priorities_Realities_and_Policy_Responses); The British Council Pakistan, Next Generation Series, 2014, 2013, 2009. Available at <https://www.britishcouncil.pk/programmes/society/next-generation>.

3. Dawn (2018), "Pakistan losses in war on terror fail to impact US discourse." Available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1381731/pakistans-losses-in-war-on-terror-fail-to-impact-us-discourse>.

4. Dawn (2017), "Young voters may decide outcome of 2018 polls." Available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1364753>

5. Unless separately referenced, the state of youth figures cited in this section have been obtained from NHDR 2017.

6. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan Census 2017. Available at [http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/Labourpercent20Force/publications/lfs\\_Annual\\_2012\\_13/t01-pak.pdf](http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/Labourpercent20Force/publications/lfs_Annual_2012_13/t01-pak.pdf).

7. The World Bank Database, 2017. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>.

(between 15-64 years), while 7.9 percent are unemployed. There are more people in the working age (15 to 64) than there are those who are older (65+), or children (<15). Almost 4 million youth attain working age every year, compared to the 1 million jobs added per annum. In order to absorb this populace into the job market—at the current participation and unemployment levels and considering the number of retirees—Pakistan needs to create 4.5 million new jobs over the next five years (0.9 million jobs annually). 25 percent of young people are working in unstable, low paid jobs without any security or benefits; while 35 percent are unpaid family workers, majority of who are women.

Young women in particular have low labour force participation rates (24 percent) and experience higher unemployment (9.1 percent). Pakistan ranked 151 out of 153 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index Report 2020 released by the World Economic Forum, only managing to surpass Iraq and Yemen. A comparison of previous rankings shows that the overall ranking for Pakistan has drastically slipped from 112 in 2006 to 151 in 2020.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, share of Pakistani youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) percent stands at 31 percent (percent of youth population).<sup>9</sup> 90 percent youth have no access to recreational facilities (libraries, cinemas, parks etc.). In terms of access to media, information and communication technologies, 48 percent own a mobile, 15 percent have access to the Internet, eight percent have access to radio, and 68 percent have access to TV.

Measuring socio-political representation and inclusion, NHDR's national youth perception survey recorded only 24 percent youth expressing trust in politicians. Yet, approximately 90 percent male and 55 percent female expressed their intention to vote in the 2018 elections. 80 percent females compared to 60 percent males felt they had no say regarding the most important decisions in their lives, such as marriage.

In such a stark country context, NHDR's empirical evidence and definitive argument was powerful and persuasive. It offered a holistic theory of change for putting Pakistan on a trajectory of sustainable development, growth and

social cohesion by focusing on and investing in its burgeoning social capital, i.e., the youth cohort. Specifically, it called for investing in three core policy areas—creatively called the three 'E's—that, if gotten right, would transform Pakistan's political economy as an emerging Asian market: 1) Quality Education; 2) Meaningful Engagement; and, 3) Gainful Employment.

### **National Benchmarking with Global Precedence**

UNDP's eye-opening assessment of Pakistan's youth bulge was neither an exercise in a theoretical vacuum nor conducted without first nodding to existing international precedence of youth-focused development practice. Prior to Pakistan NHDR, a global trend of advocating youth rights and prioritizing youth-based policymaking at international and national levels had already emerged with the turn of the century. Of the total global population, the U.N. estimates 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10-24—the largest generation of youth in history. About 90 percent of them live in developing countries, where they make up a large proportion of the population (as in Pakistan). With their numbers expected to grow between 2015 and 2030 alone, about 1.9 billion young people are projected to turn 15 years old.

The U.N. observed the first International Youth Day (IYD) on August 12, 2000, and it has been observed annually since then.<sup>10</sup> The 2019 IYD theme was "Transforming Education" to make education inclusive and accessible for all youth, as per SDG.4. This year will mark IYD's 20th anniversary.

In December 2015, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, which focuses entirely on the role that young men and women can play in peace-building and preventing violent extremism, by positioning youth and youth-led organizations as important partners in global efforts.<sup>11</sup> In September 2016, the inaugural class of 17 Young Leaders for SDGs was announced with the mandate to engage young people for advocacy and implementation of the Agenda 2030 comprising 17 SDGs. As cross-cutting partners for Agenda 2030, the U.N. envisions young people's role as critical thinkers, change-makers, innovators, communicators, and leaders.<sup>12</sup>

Using the U.N. World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond as a guide, many countries have gone ahead to establish their own youth policies.<sup>13</sup> Beyond the U.N. domain, other international actors now measure global youth development and policy indicators. "As of April 2014, of 198 countries, 122 countries (62 percent) have a national youth policy, up from 99 (50 percent) in 2013. Across all continents, 37 states (19 percent) are either developing a new or revising their current youth policy, down from 56 (28 percent) in 2013. 31 countries have no national youth policy at the moment (16 percent), down from 43 (22 percent) in 2013. Of those, 14 are in Africa, 9 in Asia, 5 in the Americas, and 3 in Europe."<sup>14</sup>

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is monitoring and maintaining data on youth's political participation. In 2010, it set up an international framework for youth participation in democracy and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians to bring fresher faces to the political process. In 2018, the IPU became the first international organization to introduce incentives to encourage more young parliamentarians to attend its meetings. According to IPU, the global percentage of MPs under 45 is 28.1 percent, while those of under 30 is 2.2 percent.<sup>15</sup>

Following the Human Development Index model, there has been a surge in independent indices measuring youth development indicators. Some of the major ones include: SDG Index, Youth Progress Index, Commonwealth Youth Development Index, Youth Wellbeing Index, Youthonomics Index, and ASEAN Youth Index. These indices measure levels of youth education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, political participation and civic participation, social and environmental education, gender equality, safety and security, and information and communication technologies. Pakistan's youth-centric human development rankings in some of these indices are: SDGs Global Rank 2018: 126/156; Commonwealth Youth Development Index 2016: 154/183 (down from 89/183); and Youth Progress Index 2018: 92/102. Pakistan's rankings in these indices served as an inspiration for NHDR 2017, and also provided much advocacy impetus for urgent policy response (see Box 1).

8. Dawn (2019), "Pakistan ranks 151 out of 153 on global gender parity index: World Economic Forum Report." Available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1522778>.

9. The World Bank, (2019). Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.NEET.ZS>.

10. For background, see The United Nations. Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/what-we-do/international-youth-day.html>; <https://www.un.org/en/events/youthday/background.shtml>

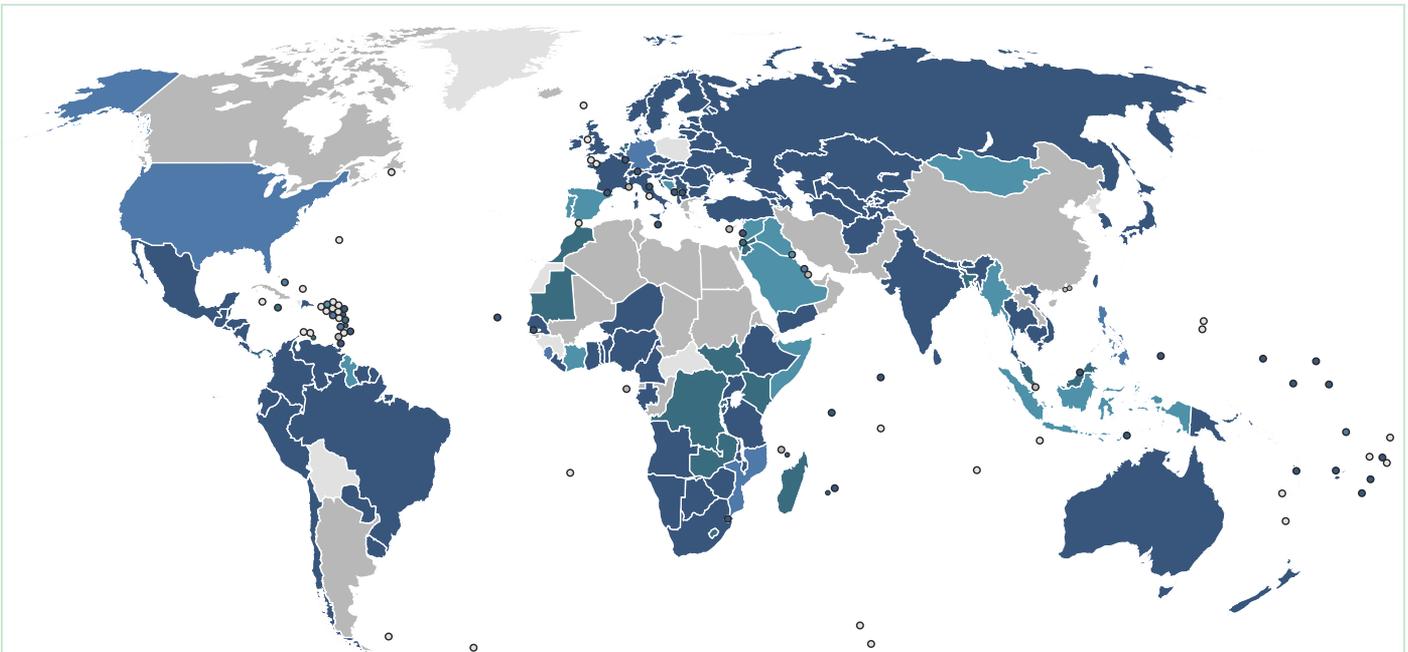
11. For background, see The United Nations. Available at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>.

12. For details, see The United Nations. Available at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/>.

13. Full text of the resolution, The United Nations. Available at <https://undocs.org/A/RES/50/81>.

14. State of Youth Policy Report 2014. Available at <https://www.youthpolicy.org/blog/youth-policy-reviews-evaluations/state-of-youth-policy-2014/>.

15. Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at <https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/youth-empowerment>.



National Youth Policies (April 2014) blue: NYP exists (light blue: draft); green: NYP under revision (light green: initial development); grey: no NYP (light grey: status unclear).

Source: State of Youth Policy 2014 Report, Youthpolicy.org

### Box 1: Grassroots Governance with District-level Youth Data: A Business Case for National Youth Development Index at District Level

Lack of baseline evidence on youth's development and access to opportunities is a bottleneck in developing targeted economic and governance policies, as well as improving service delivery by local institutions. To generate evidence for informed national policymaking, a detailed sub-national analysis of Pakistan's youth bulge is critical to understand its needs and aspirations, and assess young peoples' development progress through a multidimensional perspective.

To some extent, this gap was addressed by regional level analysis provided by the Youth Development Index of NHDR. For a cross country comparison, the Commonwealth Youth Development Index 2016 was also a good measure as it provided an aggregate analysis of Pakistan's progress in improving the well-being of young people, in comparison to other countries. However, both indices have their limitations and have also become dated. Credible new data has been generated in new research studies commissioned by organizations like the World Bank, ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA etc. However, these largely form sector-specific data with limited scales and yielding microcosmic analyses. The government's Pakistan Bureau of Statistics routinely undertakes national surveys like Pakistan Social And Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) that are aligned with the SDGs. However, Pakistan still lacks youth data at district levels that could provide in-depth profiles of all 116 districts of Pakistan and generate their HDI ranking.

For the national youth empowerment program to consistently reach, include and measure impact for all youth at the grassroots level, there is an urgent need to construct a new district-representative survey-based data gathering and research initiative, a National Youth Development Index that can aptly capture and reflect all aspects of youth's socio-economic development on a sustainable basis.

Constructed and managed through public-private partnership, YDI can measure youth's development across dimensions of Education, Employment, Health & Well-being, and Engagement while also capturing access to psychological, physical and social development. It can generate primary and real-time knowledge and evidence on youth demographics, challenges, issues, opportunities and perceptions at national, provincial and district levels. It can capture access to opportunities at the district level while identifying regional inequalities within Pakistan with regard to youth's development. It can support the government's ongoing reform and development agenda by providing insights into the particular sectors and regions where youth are facing most challenges and are unable to utilize their potential.

The government had earlier articulated its intention to undertake this exercise, but it also seems to have lost steam or priority. An institutionalized National Youth Development Index produced periodically can bring efficiency and enhance impact of Kamyab Jawan initiatives. The government must consider it as a tool to demonstrate its own success.

#### A National Policy Framework: Minding the Gaps between Narrative and Implementation

##### Policy Evolution and the Devolution Conundrum

To its credit, government of Pakistan did

try to address youth empowerment and development in various policy attempts through the decade of 2000's. These attempts at youth-friendly policymaking strived for context, content and structure, albeit with varying degrees of success. After a gestation of many years, the first

National Youth Policy of Pakistan was launched in 2008.<sup>16</sup> However, the passage of the 18th constitutional amendment in 2010 altered the national governance framework for youth both structurally and substantially: from hitherto being a federal subject, youth

16. National Youth Policy (2009), Ministry of Youth Affairs, Government of Pakistan. Available at [http://www.moya.gov.pk/national\\_youth\\_policy.html](http://www.moya.gov.pk/national_youth_policy.html). Cited in: Soomro, Kamran & Tan,

Shukui, "Youth Development Challenges in Pakistan: Need for Youth Empowerment," Public Policy and Administration Research, Volume 5, 2015, pp. 98-102. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285056125\\_Youth\\_Development\\_Challenges\\_in\\_Pakistan\\_Need\\_for\\_Youth\\_Empowerment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285056125_Youth_Development_Challenges_in_Pakistan_Need_for_Youth_Empowerment).

became a devolved provincial subject. Thus, all provinces have developed their youth policies, essentially on the pattern of the 2008 national policy.

The result has been a mixed bag of challenges, opportunities and uneven delivery. Divergent, parallel, duplicate and often uncoordinated efforts have yielded contested arguments on the efficacy of devolution as a governance model for achieving optimal success in cross-cutting social sector domains such as youth, women, education, health, culture etc. Post-18th amendment governments—both federal and provincial—have struggled with the conundrum of defining legality and scope as well as matching capabilities, resources and political wills that remain disparate at all levels for service delivery, including youth development.

The challenge of losing an optics-intensive, constituency-based portfolio of youth empowerment to the provinces was strongly felt by the Nawaz Sharif government (2013-2018), which tried to retain agency and influence by making the existing federal youth programming edgier. It set up the first five-year PKR 20 billion<sup>17</sup> Prime Minister's Youth Program that twined lucrative loans and laptop schemes with prior existing streams of internships, scholarships, technical and vocational educational trainings (TVET), sports development etc.<sup>18</sup>

While the provinces attained an opportune position of drafting maiden provincial youth policies and programs, their track record has remained sluggish and sporadic. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government led the provincial track record by becoming the first to launch its provincial youth policy and youth commission. Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan trudged along with finalization of their respective policies as late as 2018. The provincial youth policies of Punjab and KP were approved in 2012 and 2016, respectively, while Sindh approved its youth policy in 2018. Balochistan prepared its draft in 2015, but it is still pending policy approval. These youth policies have been developed by the provincial departments of Youth Affairs, Sports, Archaeology and Tourism in Punjab, Environment, Sports and Youth Affairs in Balochistan, Sports, Tourism, Culture, Archaeology, Museums and Youth Affairs in KP, and Sports and Youth Affairs in Sindh.

In the decade of 2008-2018, other major policy and strategy documents produced by the government that have a bearing on youth development and empowerment include Pakistan Vision 2025 (2013), as well as national and provincial education, TVET, population, health, employment and development policies/strategies. The Vision 2025 document recognizes the vulnerability of young people and calls for concerted national efforts to

promote comprehensive investments in human and social capital.<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding limitations in scope, approach and implementation mechanisms, these policy documents demonstrate a fair attempt by the government at creating aspirational and logical frameworks for youth empowerment that are aligned with Agenda 2030 (see Table 1). Heavy on generic narrative, these policies have primarily focused on education, skill development, and employment opportunities; while attention to rights, life skills development, health and reproductive rights, gender equality, civic and political engagement/inclusion, and needs of marginalized groups (poor, rural, NEET, minorities, disabled, trans-genders etc.) have either been ignored or lip-serviced at best.<sup>20</sup>

An interesting dimension of the evolutionary process of Pakistan's youth empowerment policies and programming have been the overarching governance paradigms of preventing violent extremism and conflict, and managing a war economy that have dominated policy narratives cross-cutting across program interventions. The emergence of the central question of youth becoming pawns in large-scale violence and, thereby, threatening the already weakened rule of law structures of Pakistan inspired a generation of national security policy documents, such as

**Table 1: Mention of Youth Issues in Youth Policies and Vision 2025 (2008-2016)**

Youth Issues	Youth Policies				Vision 2025
	Sindh	KP	Punjab	Balochistan	
General health	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sexual and reproductive health	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Family Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Skill development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth empowerment	✓	✓	✓		
Financial intervention			✓	✓	✓
Gender	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Politics	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Social security network		✓		✓	
Family and life skills	✓	✓	✓		
Volunteerism and community services	✓	✓	✓	✓	

**Source:** Youth in Pakistan: Priorities, Realities and Policy Responses, The Population Council and The David & Lucile Packard Foundation, 2016.

17. Wikipedia. Available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime\\_MinisterpercentE2percent80percent99s\\_Youth\\_Programme](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_MinisterpercentE2percent80percent99s_Youth_Programme).

18. The current National Internship Program and TVET Hunarmand Pakistan/Hunarmand Jawan programs were launched in 2006-2008 and are the longest running federal government initiatives for youth development, undergoing slight modifications through the years to suit change in political governments and their policy rhetoric.

19. Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms, Government of Pakistan, Vision 2025. Available at <http://pc.gov.pk/vision/pillars>.

20. For a good critique of national and provincial youth policies between 2008-2016, see Sathar, Zeba A. et. al., Youth in Pakistan: Priorities, Realities and Policy Responses, The Population Council and The David & Lucile Packard Foundation, 2016.

National Counter Violent Extremism Guidelines prepared by NACTA (2015) and the National Internal Security Policy (2018) of the Federal Ministry of Interior, which explicitly outline long-term institutional commitments to put Pakistan on a development-led growth trajectory through a combination of politico-legal, socio-economic and developmental engagement and inclusion of youth at national and provincial levels.

It can be argued that the recent national security policy documents have more specific and sharper policy prescriptions for youth engagement and development, compared to earlier narrative-heavy policies. Generally, they are more

strategic and structured in their implementation prescriptions because of their active interfacing with, and inspiration from, international bilateral and multilateral aid programming in Pakistan since the events of September 11, 2001. Implemented both through civil society partners and the government, the non-government, donor-funded interventions have primarily focused on youth from the prism of de-radicalization and preventing violent extremism as ‘first-generation counter-activities interventions’.<sup>21</sup>

By the time the incumbent government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf came to power on a huge youth vote bank as a result of the 2018 elections, there was already a

significant body of youth empowerment narrative and practical experience to learn lessons from and build on, including nascent interventions in ICTs for youth, as well as engagement and skills-development of at-risk youth in madaris (religious seminaries) and jails (see Table 2). The role of the international community and civil society in informing, influencing and shaping Pakistan’s youth empowerment policies and programming cannot be emphasized enough. A prime example, the NHDR, has provided a rich, credible and educational framework as a policy reference for ‘second generation post-conflict interventions’ built on the three ‘Es’ framework.

**Table 2: Youth Empowerment Initiatives of Federal and Provincial Governments (2013-2018)**

Program	Year
<b>Government of Pakistan</b>	
Prime Minister’s Youth Skills Development Program	2013-2016
Prime Minister’s Youth Training Scheme	2015-2018
Prime Minister’s Youth Business Loan Scheme	2013-2016
Prime Minister’s Fee Reimbursement Scheme	2015
Prime Minister’s Youth Internship Program	2016
<b>Government of Punjab</b>	
Laptop Awards Program	2013-2018
Danish School and Centers of Excellence Authority	2010
Punjab Education Endowment Funds (PEEF)	2012-2016
Upgrading of Institutions of Special Education	Not available
Market-oriented and Skills-based Subjects for <i>Deeni Madaris</i> (Religious Schools)	Not available
Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship Promotion	Not available
Punjab Women Empowerment Package	2012
Punjab Skills Development Fund	2011
Special Initiative for Youth in Jails	Not available
Vocational Training Programs	2014
Cab Scheme for Unemployed Youth	2015
<b>Government of Sindh</b>	
Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Program	2008
Establishment of Mobile Skill Development Unit for Underprivileged Youth (EMSDUUY)	2012
Inspiring Pakistani Youth to Reach Excellence through Counseling and Training (INSPYRE)	2012-2015
Inspiring Leadership, Empowerment and Development and Development (iLEAD)	2009-2015
Youth Empowering Spaces (YES)	2011
<b>Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa</b>	
Monthly Stipend Scheme for Unemployed Youth	2015
Free Provincial Youth Technical Education Scheme (PYTES)	2010-2013
<b>Government of Balochistan</b>	
Free Laptop Scheme (for 50,000 Students)	2016
Youth ICT Initiative (Oracle, Java, J2EE & CISCO Certified Trainings)	2015

**Source:** Youth in Pakistan: Priorities, Realities and Policy Responses, The Population Council and The David & Lucile Packard Foundation, 2016.

21. For a good mapping of donor funded and non-governmental youth empowerment initiatives, see Sathar, Zeba A. et. al., Youth in Pakistan: Priorities, Realities and Policy Responses, The Population Council and The David & Lucile Packard Foundation, 2016; and Siddiqui, Dr. Niloufer A., “Youth-led Solutions to Preventing Violent Extremism: Pakistan Case Study”, September 2017, (unpublished).

## Kamyab Jawan: Ambitions, Risks and Opportunities

Prime Minister Imran Khan's government must be commended for quickly getting down to business by making youth empowerment its core policy agenda—a decision in which UNDP Pakistan has been a consistent ally and primary technical assistance partner from day one.<sup>22</sup> Retaining leadership of the Prime Minister's Office, the government unveiled in October 2019 its National Youth Development Framework to be implemented through a multi-pronged five-year PKR 100 billion-plus Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan National Youth Development Program (2019-2023).

Formulated as a quasi-policy document while being mindful of existing de jure provincial mandates, the National Youth Development Framework has conceptually rooted itself in NHDR's three 'Es' thesis. It sets for itself an ambitious scope of strategic investments in six thematic areas for federal-provincial collaboration: 1) Mainstreaming of Marginalized Youth; 2) Economic Empowerment; 3) Civic Engagement; 4) Social Protection; 5) Health and Wellbeing; and 6) Youth-Focused Institutional Reforms.

Programmatically, the Kamyab Jawan Program is pursuing an aspirational objective to create a sustainable national ecosystem of pro-youth governance built on integrated platforms of policy, programming and public-private partnerships. To chase the government's election promise of generating 10 million jobs in five years, the program has a sharpened focus on integrating youth across its larger policy agendas of financial inclusion and loan schemes, technology-driven social entrepreneurship schemes, clean and green Pakistan initiatives, affordable housing, tourism revival and development, poverty alleviation through PM's Ehsaas program (re-branded and built on the erstwhile Benazir Income Support Program), Education Ministry's flagship National Common Curriculum, Skills for All Hunarmand Jawan TVET program, interventions for madaris integration and development (supported by UNDP), and integrating marginalized communities of Balochistan, KP and the Newly Merged Districts (erstwhile FATA). A PM's National Youth Council was also constituted last year, comprising youth from all provinces, federal regions and a wide cross-section of society, and having the mandate to monitor and advise the government on pro-youth policies and programming.<sup>23</sup>

Still in its first year, the Kamyab Jawan program is a gigantic work in progress. Its

suite of projects may not be dissimilar from those initiated previously—especially the focus on loans, scholarships, internships and TVET, as also pointed out by political detractors. Instead of being a stand-alone intervention, however, the program is amplifying its outreach and diversifying its target base by creating inroads in mainly federal and some provincial sectoral streams. Notwithstanding its similarity with the previous programs, the smart synergies that Kamyab Jawan has created with ongoing government interventions in education, health, social, commercial and other service delivery sectors is its main strength—something that previous governments had not been able to conceive. For the same reasons and in the long-run, however, the program will be evaluated and judged for its implementation quality and impact. Therefore, some key ground realities need to be factored in the overall program planning, management and sustainability to steer it towards qualitative and optimal success:

- **Build in economic contingency, crisis response and future game planning:** The program is mainly geared towards the employment/economic empowerment component, which is good and not surprising given the government's jobs agenda. Yet, the risks are great. Pakistan's current and emerging new economic challenges-aggravated greatly because of the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic-of battling intensified debt trap, shrinking fiscal space, unprecedented inflation, nose-dived GDP, GNP and productivity ratios, reduced forex and remittances, shrinking space for overseas labour demand, miniscule domestic and foreign investment coupled with global economic recessionary trends, pose real risks to its economic streams.<sup>24</sup> It will require rigorous end-to-end contingency planning and implementation, tightly-knit quality assurance systems undertaken at war footing and institutionalized at every level, and steadfast bipartisan political commitment to sustain external and domestic political economy shocks in order to steer the economic agenda towards fruition and impact. Furthermore, the program will need to sharply align itself with the changing regional and global geo-political and economic realities that have a direct bearing on Pakistan's political economy and that offer long-term opportunities for employment generation and business development. Positioning of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as a

game-changer, as well as Pakistan's positive pivoting in the emerging post-conflict reconstruction and development scenarios for neighbouring Afghanistan and the greater Central-West Asian regions, hold great promise and competition. These must not become lost opportunities. The government must immediately plug its youth programming into the emerging new regional connectivity and collaboration frameworks that it is negotiating, in order derive maximum competitive edge and geo-economic benefits.

- **Let private sector lead:** The titanic aspiration and volume of the program is exciting because it sets out to address-on an unprecedented scale-foreseeable challenges and opportunities towards youth empowerment, as identified by NHDR. Yet, it is largely steered and shouldered by the government itself, attracting limited private sector partnership so far. This makes the program susceptible to entrenched fiscal, legal, structural, and behavioral barriers within. The current program management structures can serve marketing, advocacy and inception targets at best, but will need substantive and institutionalized build-up and investment as the program expands, intensifies and matures. For this purpose, the program will need to create and execute an aggressive private sector engagement and partnership strategy to generate a shared investment responsibility that is incentivized with profitable and equitable ownership and successes. Private sector will need to be given a leading role not only in program investment but also implementation and management. There are success stories of large-scale government initiatives that were envisioned and executed on public-private partnership models (such as, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, Aik Hunar Aik Nagar, Pakistan Peace Collective, Punjab Urban Unit, Sindh Education Foundation), and these need to be emulated for this program.
- **Ensure real-time gendered programming:** The framework is rightly gendered in its outlook and articulation: a gendered policy agenda is easy to adopt in narratives. But the real test and measure of Kamyab Jawan will lie in committed gendered programming in its macro and micro design, approach and targets that can

22. See Government of Pakistan-UNDP Pakistan partnership on Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Program highlighted and explained in Dar, Usman & Artaza, Ignacio, "Pakistan's best national investment: Kamyab Jawan", The Express Tribune, September 1, 2019. Available at <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2046471/6-pakistans-best-national-investment-kamyab-jawan/>.

23. For details, see official website, [www.kamyabjawan.gov.pk](http://www.kamyabjawan.gov.pk)

24. The News (2020), "Moody expects high indebtedness, fund paucity to hurt Pakistan's economy." Available at <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/631097-moody-expects-high-indebtedness-fund-paucity-to-hurt-pakistan-s-economy>.

impact optimal gender equity. Gendered programming should not stop at mere inclusion of women and girls for optics, macro divisibles and quotas, for those are initial steps. The Pakistani parliament is a good case study of how gender needs to be taken above and beyond inclusion, and towards change-driven customized and structured interventions that address vulnerabilities and risks as well as strengths and opportunities unique to women. For instance, blanket dispersal of loans to women and girls without a baseline assessment of existing preferences, barriers and positioning in the current economic metrics will not prove efficient. The program needs to create a sharp and well aligned gender empowerment logical framework that brings together all its interventions into a comprehensive model for real-time leveraging of women's agency, capabilities and values as change agents.

- **Sharpen TVET, institutionalize mentoring:** In scope at least, the education component has niche value and promise. The National Common Curriculum agenda, madaris integration program, qualitatively enhanced TVET interventions, and ICT-driven social enterprise initiatives indicate some healthy departures from tried and tested efforts of the past. Again, the eventual success of these initiatives will be tested by political commitment, availability and allocation of sustained resources, strong and qualitative management, and partnerships with the private sector. Specifically in the TVET sector, the present institutional leadership at the national level seems passionate and cognizant of the need for overhauling and reforming the sector, which remains dependent on government.<sup>25</sup> However, it also needs to do an open audit of why consistent government investment in the sector has failed to produce the desired results. Curriculum changes are need of the hour, but so is a holistic and honest assessment of the sector's over-dependence on state as the sole patron in a liberalized economy. For TVET to really become relevant and preferable for the market, the program will need to aggressively work on building industry's equity, ownership and investment. The program will also need to assess new regional and global competitiveness and demand-supply frameworks, especially in emerging areas of early response and crisis management arising in disaster risk reduction

domains. The international political economy models and value-chains of the previous decades have changed radically, especially for Pakistan. These now face unprecedented competition from countries with better HDI indicators, law-fare scrutiny and punitive economic regimes owing to post 9/11 geo-political realities, as well as increased vulnerabilities caused by natural and man-made disasters and pandemics. It presses upon the urgent need to build a well-integrated critical life, global citizenship and universal value skills across the formal, informal and TVET program streams that can produce 'well-rounded' youth as preferred candidates by domestic and international markets. This must be supplanted with a robust and committed mentoring and career-counseling framework. It is not enough to provide education and skills to youth and leave them to the whims of the market forces and fate, as has been our national historical culture and attitude. Youth need guidance, mentoring and other soft support systems to be able to navigate the complex and challenging pathways to economic growth and empowerment. The sharp increase in Pakistan's national incidence of mental health issues, drug abuse and suicide among youth call for an urgent need to twine all youth initiatives with a comprehensive framework of psycho-social support, institutionalized mentoring, and assisted pathways for socio-economic integration.<sup>26</sup>

- **Prioritize health and engagement:** As with previous efforts, the weakest links remain those of youth health and engagement, with most planned initiatives still a wish-list on paper. The need for prioritizing young people's health and well-being goes hand in hand with the need for leveraging this cohort for national development. Latest government data on COVID-19 shows Pakistan's youth being particularly vulnerable to large-scale health crises, which calls for the need to create a tailored pro-youth health stream built into the Kamyab Jawan program, as per its Framework commitments.<sup>27</sup> Beyond its ambitious narrative, the program will also need to flesh out and roll-out specific interventions that actively speak to the youth's emerging identity, intellectual, aspirational and human factor agencies. The program should protect itself from an apparent tendency to dole out well-advertised hand-outs among youth from a

traditional constituency politics paradigm. Instead, it should buttress and link incentives with value-based, qualitative state-citizen trust and full-spectrum relationship-building aimed towards creating pathways for youth's self-actualization-as fully integrated, responsible and productive citizens of a progressive Pakistan. This is especially needed for NEET youth in the backwaters of Pakistan that remain unreachable, ignored and excluded from processes of national development. In this respect, the PM's Youth Council should be put to task in earnest, and paper plans for the engagement component should be put to practice at the earliest. Tailored initiatives for women, girls, minorities, transgenders, specially-abled and conflict/crisis-affected youth must be prioritized over blanket interventions without target group segmentation.

- **Create and disseminate data analytic:** Previous governments invested billions in program streams similar to the current ones, but the net result was not clear because of a lack of regular and transparent monitoring, reporting and impact assessment mechanisms, data and information. As political governments, they paid the price in the elections of 2013 and 2018. The same metric of public assessment and judgment will also be true, perhaps amplified three-fold, for the current government's youth empowerment initiatives. For justification, testing of its articulated policy hypothesis, as well as generating evidence for informed policy decisions and advocacy, the program must establish a robust 360-degrees monitoring, reporting, transparency, impact assessment, information, communications, grievance resolution framework and capability matrix-at institutional and parliamentary levels-that educates and explains to the people how public money is being invested for maximum bang for the buck. The centrality of transparent and inclusive research, evidence-based policymaking, programming and budgetary information for good governance is no longer just an idea. It is the key to measure, communicate and generate success.
- **Win national ownership:** Finally, optimal impact and sustainability of the government's Kamyab Jawan program will depend not only on its resources, partnerships, and drawing a vertical legitimacy from the Prime Minister's Office, but will also depend on its ability to become a horizontal whole-of-the-government and rights-

25. Arab News, Hassan, Javed (2019), "Empowering the country's youth should be Pakistan's national priority." Available at <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1458341>.

26. Dawn, Hassan, Tanzeel (2019), "Why are more Pakistani's taking their own lives?" Available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1418126>.

27. The News (2020), "Young people form majority of coronavirus cases in Pakistan: Dr. Zafar Mirza." Available at <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/634671-young-people-form-majority-of-coronavirus-cases-in-pakistan-dr-zafar-mirza>.

based mission that is owned, shared and implemented by all pillars of the state, including parliament, provincial governments, strategic federal and provincial ministries, Council of Common Interests, Economic Coordination Committee, and the newly formed National Development Council. Earlier program advocacy had included the objective of introducing pro-youth legislation to make institutionalized youth-focused policymaking a core tenet of governance, but that intention seems to have lost steam or priority over time.

In the current highly polarized national political and devolved governance climate, this is a major impact and sustainability risk factor that the program must positively address by exploring all possible legal, institutional, legislative and political avenues. Prime Minister's Office is the symbol of the Federation and it must shoulder greater responsibility-as Coordinator in Chief-for inclusion of all stakeholders in this national priority endeavor.

In Pakistan's complex and highly fluid

country context, the government's youth empowerment and development initiatives will need to be agile and capable of keeping up with a high-quotient, high-wired youth that is fast, smart, politically opinionated, and not without its own agency. Conclusively, successful youth programming will not only implement pre-determined agendas but will also be smart and flexible enough to effectively respond to emerging socio-political and economic realities as well as global crises (such as COVID-19), that may not have been factored in the original design-think process.



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**Special Feature**

**Empowering  
our Youth**

**PRIME MINISTER'S  
KAMYAB JAWAN PROGRAMME**

# Special Feature

## Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Programme Empowering the Youth of Pakistan



Usman Dar

Special Assistant to Prime Minister  
on Youth Affairs

Our world today has more than 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10-24 years, majority of whom are concentrated in developing countries, such as Pakistan. Disadvantaged, these young people are facing higher levels of poverty, economic inequality and political instability compared to the youth in rich and stable countries. This development challenge is most visible in Pakistan where dynamic demographic shifts are occurring. Having suffered one of the highest global instances of terrorism in the last two decades, Pakistan is the fifth most populous and one of the youngest countries in the world. Currently, it has the largest generation of young people ever recorded in its history-68 percent of Pakistanis are below the age of 30 years, and 27 percent are aged between 15-29.

Majority of our young population is exposed to multidimensional and inter-sectoral vulnerabilities resulting from lack of opportunities for meaningful social engagement and economic empowerment. Currently, youth illiteracy stands at 30 percent and they constitute around 42 percent of Pakistan's total labour force (between 15-64 years), and approximately 44 percent of the total electorate. Every year nearly four million young Pakistanis attain working age; according to the National Human Development Report 2017, and 4.5 million new jobs are required over the next five years to absorb this populace into the job market.

The avenues for extracurricular activities and meaningful engagement are also limited and majority of our youth lack access to public spaces like libraries, cinemas, and parks in their localities.

These pertinent realities raise hard questions for our country's future, which must be addressed as a matter of top national policy priority and human security. Therefore, the government of Pakistan has embarked on an unflinching quest to find and apply viable solutions that can mitigate these challenges, by transforming the country's youth bulge as a force multiplier for progressive socio-economic and political change.

As a first step in our national journey towards youth empowerment, we developed a National Youth Development Framework (NYDF) of the government of Pakistan. The NYDF envisions three critical youth-centred investments: the best that can be made in Pakistan's future. These include, 1) Quality Education; 2) Gainful Employment; and, 3) Meaningful Engagement. With the three 'Es' as cross-cutting concerns, the NYDF identifies strategic, practical and timely investments in six major thematic areas-mainstreaming marginalized youth; employment and economic empowerment; civic engagement; social protection; health and well-being; and, youth-focused institutional reform. The actions under these themes are being planned and will be executed through collaborative efforts of federal and provincial governments at national, provincial and grassroots level to ensure maximum outcome.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan has recently launched the Kamyab Jawan Programme, which stems from NYDF's vision and a core belief that today's youth are the drivers of tomorrow's prosperous Pakistan. The Programme is comprehensive, it aims to empower the bulge of youth and benefit one million young Pakistanis in its first phase. Under the programme, there are six planned key initiatives including, 1) Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme; 2) Skills for All Programme; 3) Green Youth Movement; 4) National Internship Programme; 5) Start-up Pakistan Programme; and, 6) Jawan Markaz Initiative.

The government has officially launched the first two initiatives under the Kamyab Jawan Programme - Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme and Skills for All Programme. The former scheme aims to create 10 million jobs through the vision of "Hunar se Karobar Tak", where youth will be graduated from basic asset transfer to interest free loans of up to PKR 100,000, to micro loans, and then finally small loans of up to PKR 25 million. This scheme has been developed in collaboration with three main departments-Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) (along with three other major banks including National Bank of Pakistan, Bank of Punjab and Bank of Khyber), and Small and Medium Enterprise Authority (SMEDA) to ensure smooth execution. Together, these entities will look after the execution of interest free loan programme, loan subsidies and business trainings. Ultimately, the beneficiaries of the scheme will make the future workforce and will help in eradicating poverty by creating opportunities for fellow countrymen.

The Skills for All Programme, another initiative under the Kamyab Jawan Programme which has been launched, aims to equip the youth of Pakistan with various technical skills which would create meaningful opportunities for them in the future. Under this programme, major focus is on providing hands-on skills to the youth in high-tech and high-end technologies, establishing a National Employment Exchange platform which would provide consolidated national and international job opportunities, and setting up Smart Tech Labs and Business Incubation Centres in public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes. This programme is inclusive and is not only targeting the urban youth, but also youth in less developed districts as well as those in madrassas.

The remaining initiatives of the Kamyab Jawan Programme are currently in the pipeline. Once launched, these initiatives will be providing grants for eco-innovative projects that help in tackling environmental issues, and support to youth, for initiating their start-ups.

Young Pakistanis are also our biggest

strength during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The government recently announced the Corona Relief Tiger Force, a volunteer platform for young people, to help deal with coronavirus relief efforts. Only within a few weeks of announcement, over a million young people registered to be a part of the Corona Relief Tiger Force. These young volunteers, in a risk-free manner, are supporting the government in ration distribution, implementing social distancing protocols in mosques, management of quarantine centres, identifying profiteers and hoarders, and raising awareness regarding coronavirus and its preventive measures. The zeal and energy of Pakistani youth is com-

mendable as volunteers from all parts of the country are going above and beyond to help curb the spread of the coronavirus and support the most vulnerable segments of the society.

Youth voices and participation are key parts of sustainable development and important for long-term policymaking. The government, through its Kamyab Jawan Programme and Corona Relief Tiger Force, commits to empowering the youth by providing gainful opportunities and placing young Pakistanis at the centre of its transformative national agenda. Towards this goal, we will work earnestly and methodically, by leading bipartisan political affirmative action for

pro-youth policies as well as by leveraging public-private partnerships and global alliances for pro-youth equities. Our best hope for a new and changed Pakistan is supporting economically productive, politically responsible and socially integrated youth who espouse the values of merit, equity, volunteerism, inclusivity and tolerance. We will not leave anyone behind, and all the actions and initiatives will be inclusive. And so, the Framework and the Programme will be the government's compass and barometer for our collective journey to positioning Pakistan's youth as Kamyab Jawan (successful youth), in all spheres of life.



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**Survey**

# **Youth and Adolescent Perception Survey**

## **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

# Survey

## Youth and Adolescent Perception Survey

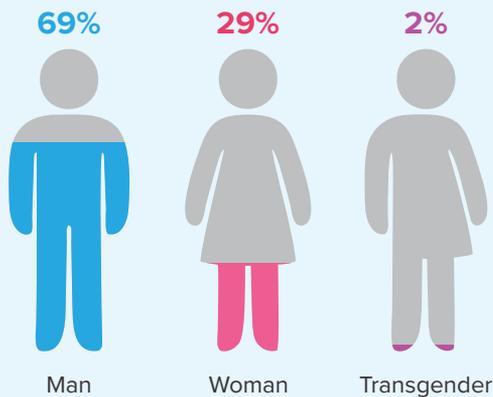
In April and May 2020, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA Pakistan, along with partners Viamo and Accountability Lab Pakistan, conducted a survey of more than 10,000 young people from across the country to understand the impact of, and responses to,

the COVID-19 pandemic within that demographic. The survey was conducted virtually online, as well as by sharing the same link through social media and Whatsapp, and offline through Interactive Voice Response (IVR).

### Background and Demographics (Of Respondents)

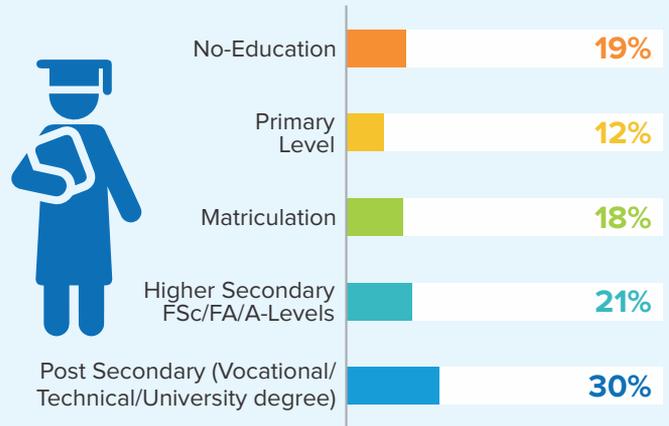
#### Number of Responses

The survey received **10,437** responses across **146** districts in all **4** provinces including Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad Capital Territory.



#### Level of Education

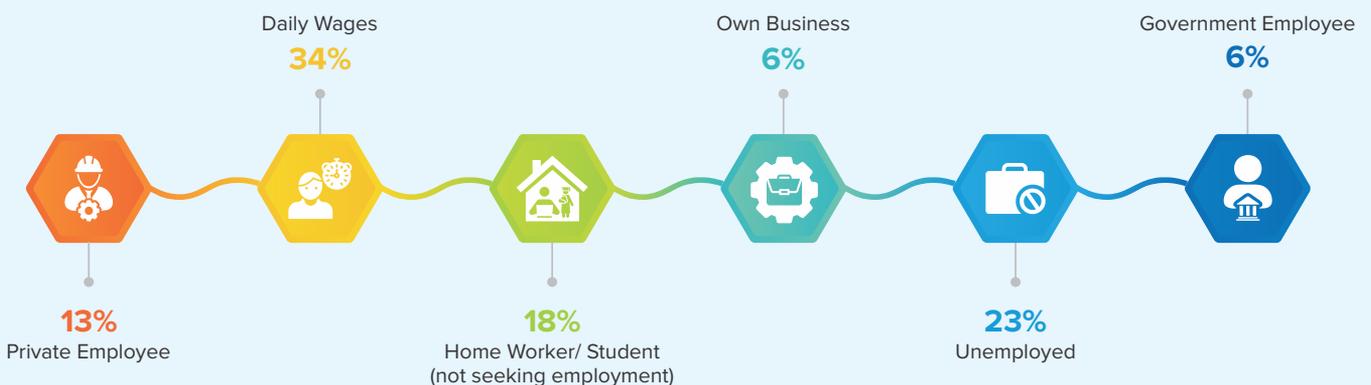
**75** percent of participants were well educated, with a minimum of masters degree.



#### Age (in years)



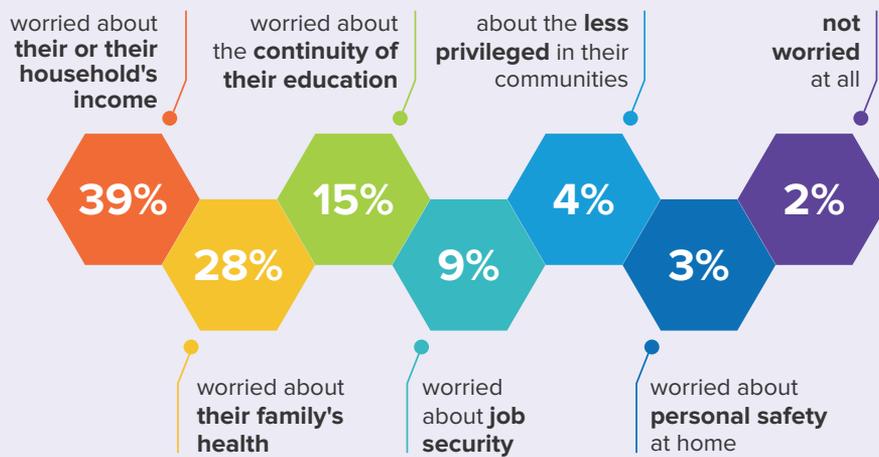
#### Employment Status



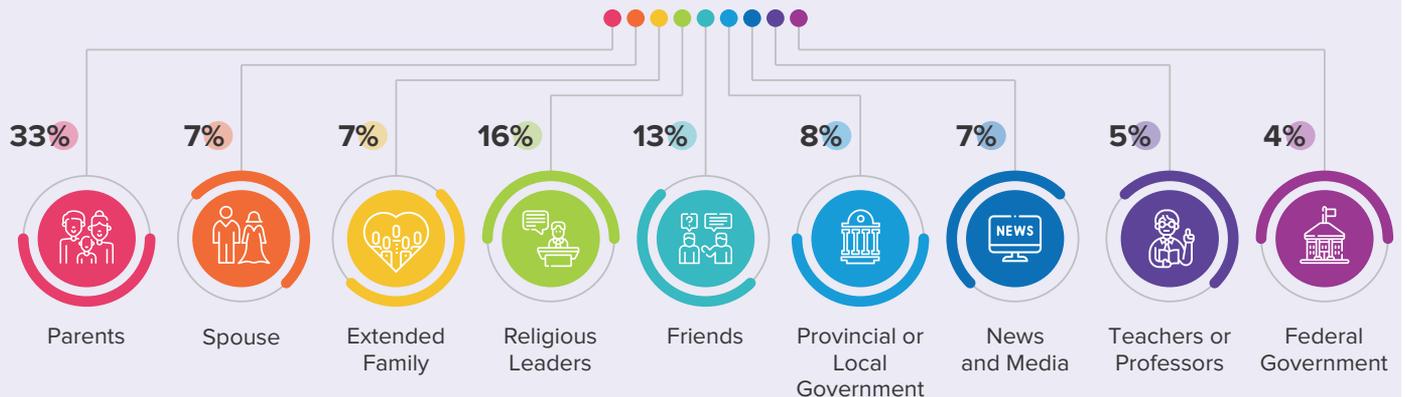
# COVID-19: The Past, Present and Future



## Worrying Impacts

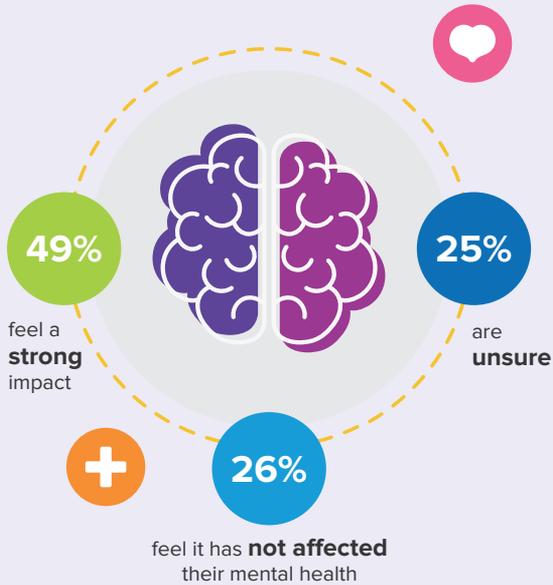


## Influences

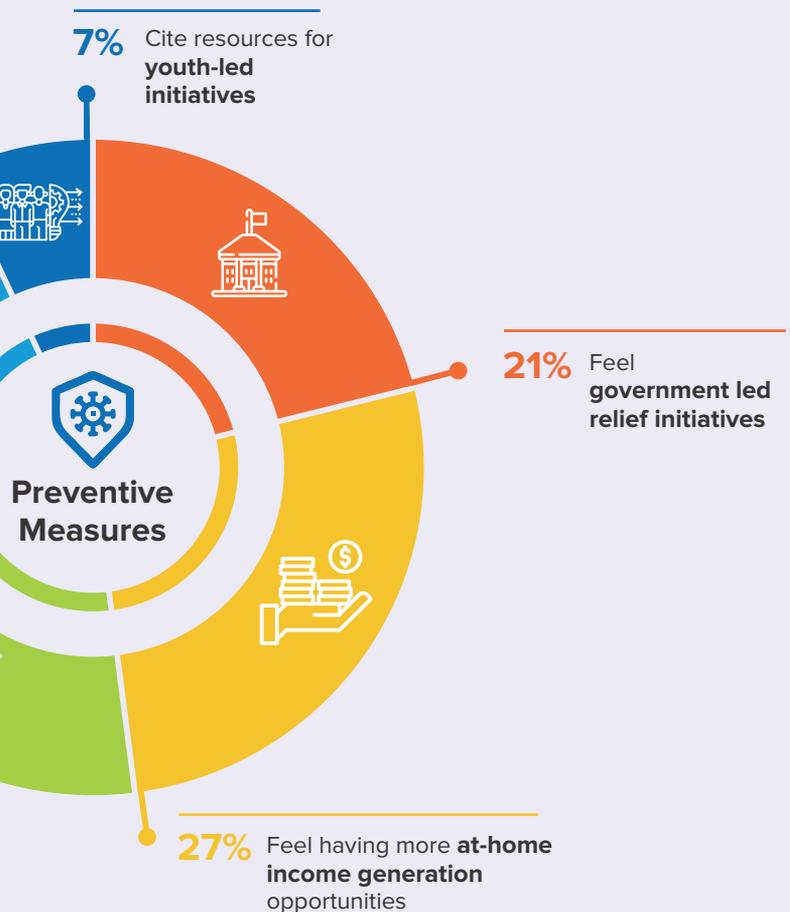
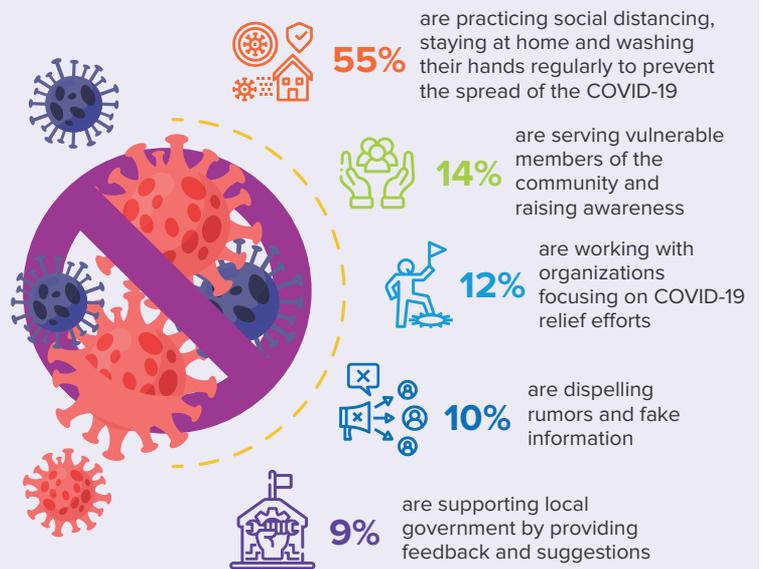


# COVID-19: The Past, Present and Future

## Mental Health Impacts



## Spreading Awareness & Offering Support

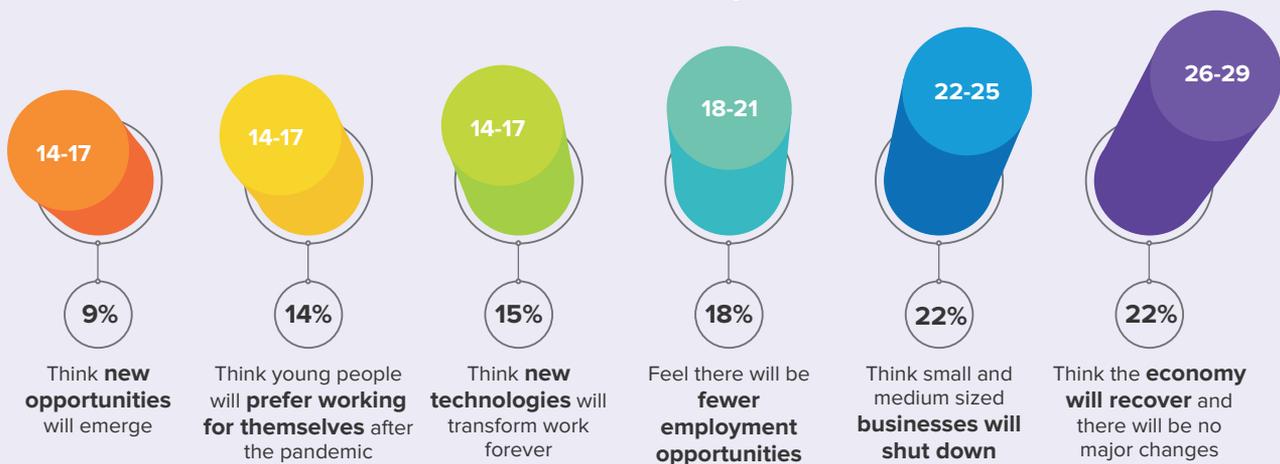


# COVID-19: The Past, Present and Future

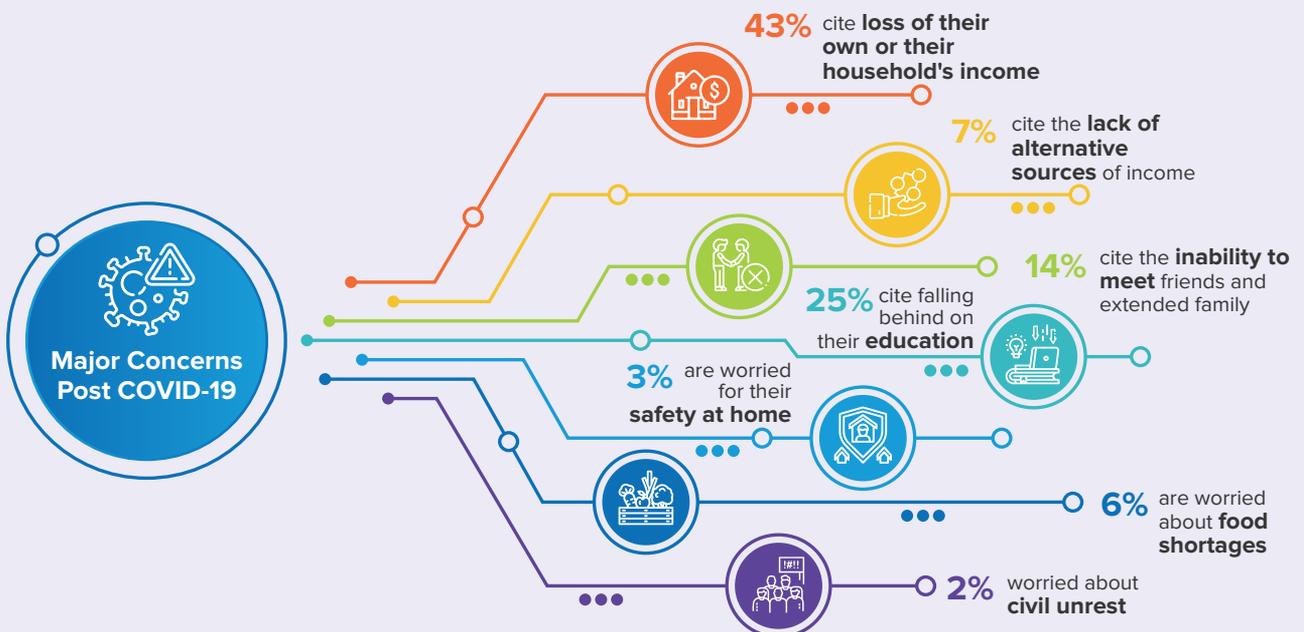
## Future Perspectives



## Economic Transformation post COVID-19



## Major Concerns Post COVID-19



## Analysis and Possible Policy Recommendations



**Opinion**

# **Empowering our Youth**

**THE EXPERTS' SPEAK**

## Hunarmand Pakistan- 'Skills for All': A National Imperative



Javed Hassan

Chairman

National Vocational and Technical  
Training Commission

More than 60 percent of Pakistan's population of 207 million is below the age of 35. If trained and skilled to participate in domestic and international skilled labour markets, this youth bulge can enhance the nation's industrial productivity, competitiveness, domestic production and exports, as well as significantly boost inflows of foreign remittances. However, the population dividend will not last forever, and if left unskilled and not economically engaged, they are likely to add to the depressing statistics of growing numbers of those engulfed in poverty. Even more ominously, some of them could turn to anti-social activities. The country must take advantage of the window of opportunity provided by its greatest asset: the youth.

### The Need for Skills Training

Numerous examples across the globe, including both developed and emerging market economies, have demonstrated that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) offers the shortest and swiftest path to productive youth engagement. It is estimated that around

52 percent of the workforce in America, 68 percent in the United Kingdom, 75 percent in Germany, 80 percent in Japan and 96 percent in South Korea, has undergone formal skills training.<sup>1</sup> In comparison, less than five percent have undergone similar training in Pakistan. This reflects the fact that in Pakistan, the TVET sector has until recently largely been ignored, with paltry investment coming from both the public and private sectors. It suffers from limited training capacity, outdated workshops and laboratories, obsolete training equipment, archaic teaching methods and antiquated curricula. Therefore, it has been unable to meet the skill training needs of domestic and international markets, both in terms of quantity and quality.

There are an estimated 1.8 million new labour market entrants each year.<sup>2</sup> Add to that approximately three million youth who are not captured in the formal schooling, but nevertheless need to be trained if the nation is to fully take advantage of the demographic dividend. Therefore, skills development capacity for approximately three million trainees is required even if we preclude youth entering into other avenues of tertiary education.

Against this urgent requirement there are only an estimated 400,000 training places available in 3,740 training institutes with 18,000 trained teachers in the formal TVET sector.<sup>3</sup> If the entire cohort of three million youth were to be provided skills training based on traditional training methodology, it would require at least 45,000 further training institutes and 200,000 more TVET teachers to be inducted into the system.<sup>4</sup> The urgency of the requirement of revamping the TVET sector and financial constraints calls for innovative methodologies of delivering skills training, as well as multiple sources of funding.

Foreign Remittances have remained one

of the main planks of Pakistan's economy, and the steady flow of highly skilled Pakistani workforce is essential not only for sustainability of remittances, but also for optimizing the benefits of this precious stream of foreign exchange for the country.

Accruing benefits to Pakistani youth from gainful employment in the international market is another pressing reason for focusing on imparting appropriate skills to youth for the international labour market. However, the majority of Pakistani youth work in the international markets as unskilled workers and earn less than a third of what a skilled worker earns. Moreover, due to the increasing demand for a highly skilled workforce in the international market, we are rapidly trailing behind our international competitors.

It is therefore essential to establish a robust TVET institutional mechanism which is not only capable of producing skilled workforce in accordance with international standards, but is also adequately resilient and adept to constantly update itself in consonance with the demands of the international job market.

### Ideas to Increase Skills Training Opportunities in Pakistan

#### i. Short term measures

Some of the urgent measures that can significantly enhance TVET training capacity in a relatively short period can be achieved without requiring expansion of the existing infrastructure. This includes optimizing the utilization of existing facilities, for example, making Double Shift Training Programmes; enhancing Role of Private Schooling Systems in TVET sector; engaging universities into TVET System for high-end technologies; implementing Apprenticeship Laws across the country; implementing the System of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); introducing distance/online

1. Javed Hassan (2019), "Skills for All – A National Imperative for Pakistan where Youth is mainly Ignored". Available at <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/skills-for-all-national-imperative-for-pakistan-where-youth-is-mainly-ignored/>

2. Ibid

3. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training Taskforce on Education (2018), "National "Skills for All" Strategy A Roadmap for Skill Development in Pakistan." Available at <https://tvetreform.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2020/02/National%20Skills%20for%20All%20Strategy.pdf>

4. Ibid

Learning Systems for freelancing etc. Additionally, exploring public-private partnerships for training opportunities as well as setting-up vocational workshops /institutes in Madaris, can also play a critical role in capacity enhancement and ensuring participation of youth from all segments of society.

## ii. Private Sector partnerships

While the above proposals can alleviate the capacity constraint in the short-term, given the scale of the challenge, there is a need to invest in expanding the existing TVET infrastructure. The current training capacity is not only insufficient in terms of capacity, but also limited in terms of providing the quality of training that national and international job markets require. Several hundred billion rupees of investment is envisaged to be the required investment over a number of years. While the government must play a critical catalytic role in providing enabling impetus, there is also an urgent need for the productive and meaningful involvement of the private sector in meeting the challenge.

## iii. Industrial partnerships

Active involvement of industry in design, delivery and placement of graduates benefits not only in provision of employable skills to the youth, but also boosts industry to be more productive, competitive and efficient. In countries like Germany, the United Kingdom and Australia, the entire TVET system is owned, managed and propelled by their industry. This happens due to a realization of skilled workers as the most important instruments of increased productivity, industrial efficiency and quality assurance of their products. In order to help develop a similar ecosystem in Pakistan, the government at both the federal and provincial levels, can explore possibilities for public-private partnerships in setting up industry-based TVET institutes which can be jointly operated/managed by industry and government.

In the South Asian context, countries such as India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal have made significant strides in terms of revamping their respective TVET systems with enhanced focus on industry engagement, and resultantly have moved from the old traditional supply-led system to a

demand-oriented Competency Based Training (CBT) mode. The demand-driven system ensures systematic and institutional engagement of industry in the overall TVET system through varied platforms.

Pakistan's current government in consultation with industry, is piloting CBT as part of recently introduced National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) and other industry-led initiatives. The focus is to shift training from overwhelmingly supply-driven approach to being demand-driven with strong involvement of the formal private sector. It will, in due course, be for employers to identify and help design courses to provide skills and knowledge that they would readily employ. Partnership between industry and institution is beneficial in terms of employability, enhanced workplace productivity and enterprise competitiveness, and therefore will translate into overall socio-economic development.

## Current Initiatives and Way Forward

The country today has a government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan that is cognizant of these challenges as well as the opportunity that the youthful population offers. More importantly, it is determined to provide them with skills to enable them to live up to their enormous potentials and contribute towards the development of Naya Pakistan.

The Prime Minister launched the "Hunarmand Pakistan Programme" in January this year, to serve as a catalyst in bringing the technical and vocational training sector at par with the requirements of both national and international job markets. Earlier skill training initiatives only focused on increasing numbers without much focus on the quality of training delivered and relevance to industry requirements. However, the Hunarmand Pakistan Programme looks not only to impart skills training in latest technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Cloud Computing etc., but will also aim to upscale the capacity and quality of overall technical and vocational trainings in the country.

Despite financial constraints, the government has allocated ten billion rupees for first phase of the programme under which 170,000 youth will directly benefit from skills training and certification. Seventy smart laboratories will be established under this programme which will provide distance learning facilities using latest technologies to our youth. Around 20,000 youth will be provided the opportunity of training in different industries through apprenticeship. Skill training facilities will be established in seventy Madrassas across the country to enable Madrasa youth to avail a diverse range of vocational opportunities as well.

Additionally, to build international linkages and ensure international recognition of Pakistani qualifications, fifty Pakistani technical training institutes will be affiliated with the best international institutes to give joint diploma/certificate programmes. Also, ten 'country-of-destination' specific facilitation centers will be established to prepare youth for the international job market. In order to standardize the quality of technical training across the country and ensure its international equivalence, at least two hundred standard qualifications will be developed. To upgrade the standard of teaching, two thousand Pakistani instructors will be given latest technological training by inviting Master Trainers from advanced countries. A National Youth Employment Exchange will be established and to encourage entrepreneurship in our skilled youth, fifty Business Incubation Centers (BICs) will be set up.

The programme will also ensure that skilled workforce required for CPEC projects is produced through these skills' enhancement opportunities. The programme also aims to target the economic empowerment of women and other marginalized segments of society, for which special provisions are being made. The programme's objective is not only to contribute to help reduce unemployment in the country, but also to ensure the availability of skilled workforce for industry. This all is essential to enhance employable skills of youth who can contribute to the economy. Skillful youth will as a result, make industry internationally competitive and increase exports.

## Freedom of Engagement



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### Introduction

Freedom of civic and political engagement is a fundamental cornerstone of a thriving democracy. In the context of Pakistan, where approximately 67 percent of the total population is under the age of 30, and approximately 29 percent between the ages of 15-29, the future of a democratic Pakistan depends on a politically engaged youth. However, this 'youth' is not a homogenous entity, but cuts across class, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexualities and geographical location. Therefore, in evaluating the nature of 'freedom of engagement' for young Pakistanis, whether civic or political, these varied experiences are important in determining the space and direction of their engagement.

The conditions required for democratic political and civic engagement are further compounded by a state and an education

system; that only permits controlled forms of 'engagement' cracking down on 'dissent' and expressions of political identities that go against the state sanctioned narrative. In a sample of 1900 young Pakistanis, it was found that the poor state of 'political literacy' and a lack of trust in democratic institutions is another problem that has weakened the social contract between the citizen and the state.<sup>1</sup>

However, despite these limitations there are pockets of civic and political engagement that may present the possibility of change in Pakistan. These examples include the Progressive Students' Collective (PSC), one of the organizers of the annual Students' Solidarity March with students, and their allies coming together across the country. Another example is the annual Aurat March that brings together cis, trans, non-binary women and men from different backgrounds, mobilizing them on issues related to gender discrimination and violence. These two examples also highlight youth issues that cut across class, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexualities and geographical location. Other forms of engagement can also be witnessed through initiatives such as the Youth Parliament, the National Youth Assembly and civic engagement through Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), that promote a sense of civic responsibility.

According to the Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017 (NHDR), only 24 percent of young Pakistanis expressed trust in politicians, yet 90 percent male and 55 percent female were eager to participate in the 2018 elections.<sup>2</sup> Mobilization of the 'youth vote' by various political parties, especially the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) that claims to centre 'youth' in its policies, has definitely contributed to this eagerness to participate. Yet without effective 'political literacy' and an

understanding related to the process of democracy, that moves beyond populist leaders and the rhetoric of political parties, there is an added danger that this eagerness may not be harnessed.

Freedom of engagement also includes freedom online. Internet usage in Pakistan is at 32.9 percent of the total population, with Pakistan ranked at 26 (not free) in the 'Freedom on the Net' scale, similar to Egypt and Uzbekistan.<sup>3</sup> Facebook's Audience Insights from 2017 show 25 to 30 million active users of Facebook in Pakistan (22 percent women and 78 percent men).<sup>4</sup> These include 57 percent women and 48 percent men who are between the ages of 18-24 years, with majority present in Lahore and Karachi.<sup>5</sup>

Despite limited access to the internet, surveillance of online sites, especially social media, has increased under the new government with the introduction of the Citizen Protection (Against Online Harm) Rules 2020, that violates a citizen's right to freedom of expression, and privacy.<sup>6</sup> With increasing curtailment of freedom of engagement, youth movements like the PSC, or Aurat March provide an alternative and the possibility of change in the country. These movements are attempting to unite the voices of young Pakistanis across the country, demanding their rights, and accountability of state institutions through a democratic process of protest and assembly.

### What is Civic and Political Engagement?

Civic and political engagement can take the form of 'individual' or collective actions that are related to 'issues of public concern', with political engagement ranging from democratic participation through exercising the right to vote or engaging in activism that strengthens democracies by ensuring accountability of those in power.<sup>7</sup>

1. See Lall, Marie and Tania Saeed (2020), "Youth and the National Narrative. Education, Terrorism and the Security State in Pakistan." London: Bloomsbury.  
2. UNDP Pakistan (2018), "Pakistan National Human Development Report 2017. Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan."  
3. Freedom House (2019), "Freedom on the Net 2019. The crisis of social media."  
4. Facebook Audience Insights 2017; Lall and Saeed (2020).  
5. ibid  
6. Digital Rights Foundation (2020), "DRF Condemns Citizen's Protection (Against Online Harm) Rules 2020 as an Affront on Online Freedoms." Available at <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/drf-condemns-citizens-protection-against-online-harm-rules-2020-as-an-affront-on-online-freedoms/>  
7. Supra 2

The 'essence of democracy' lies in the empowerment of 'ordinary citizens' that takes the form of a 'human-empowerment model'. This model works across three dimensions: 'action resources' that include 'material' and 'cognitive resources such as education and skills which help people govern their own lives'; 'self-expression values' that inculcate a value system towards greater participation in democracies; and 'democratic institutions' that ensure the provision of 'civil and political rights' to its citizens.<sup>8</sup>

The survival of a democracy therefore lies in these democratic values that cut across all aspects of social and political life. It is important to highlight the role of an 'active citizen' for such democratic values to be fully realized. Bernard Crick makes a distinction between a 'good citizen' who obeys the laws, and 'an active citizen' who strives to change unjust laws by working with other citizens for the betterment of society.<sup>9</sup> 'Good citizens' can exist in autocratic states as well where obeying the law is the criteria, but it is the 'active citizen' that can truly bring about social change.

When exploring the nature of youth engagement in Pakistan, this distinction particularly holds true for different kinds of youth engagement that have emerged, with the PSC, and Aurat March located within an 'active' citizenship framework as defined by Crick, while organizations such as the Youth Parliament or the National Youth Assembly take the form of a good citizenship agenda. To what extent such forms of engagement are successful often depends on the kind of resistance against, or support by democratic institutions.

### **The Nature of Political Engagement amongst the Youth in Pakistan**

According to NHDR 2017, Pakistan has moved from 'medium to low levels of youth development between 2010 and 2015', an 18 percent drop indicative of a 69 percent fall in political participation and 58 percent fall in civic participation.<sup>10</sup> There is a general agreement that the nature of political engagement across generations has further decreased.<sup>11</sup> This can be attributed to a culture of surveillance and control in universities that curtails any form of political mobilization of young students, evident in the ban imposed on student unions in the 1980s. It can also be attributed to a schooling system that limits the possibility of critical engagement and questioning.

However, the Student Solidarity March in 2019 led by PSC together with other progressive student groups, challenged this culture of control. The PSC was formed with the main purpose of providing a platform to address the grievance of young students from across Pakistan. It has also been vocal in its support for social, economic, political-in essence human rights-across all groups of marginalized citizens in Pakistan. The Students Solidarity March 2019 was instrumental in illustrating both the power of engagement, and the limitations that curtail the freedom of young Pakistanis to exercise their right to assembly. Their demands included, though not limited, to the restoration of student unions, provision of sexual harassment inquiry policies in educational institutions, end to austerity cuts to the higher education sector, five percent allocation of GDP to education, and surveillance free campuses. Thousands of students and their allies, including academics, teachers, civil society and human rights activists, lawyers, and citizens were mobilized across cities in Pakistan. The success of the Students Solidarity March is evident in the conversations it evoked in provincial parliaments and media about the rights of young Pakistanis, with PSC members invited to share their demands on mainstream media channels. After the march, the Pakistan government declared that it would explore the possibility of restoring student unions after consultation, with the caveat that the unions will be used 'to groom future leaders of the country'.<sup>12</sup> Following that, the Sindh government approved a bill, the Sindh Students Union Act 2019, to restore student unions-the implementation is yet to be seen.

The Aurat March is another example of political engagement. The organizers of the Aurat March are feminists, activists, lawyers and citizens who mobilize different communities to fight against gender and sexual harassment and violence, as well as economic exploitation, demanding reproductive rights, environmental justice, access to basic necessities, minority rights, political participation rights, ethical representation in media, and disability rights. The march takes place on March 8, celebrating International Women's Day. However, the organizers and participants have faced backlash from right wing groups, as well as other citizens, accused of going against tradition and culture. This accusation stems from slogans and placards that are considered offensive; slogans that echo the experiences of cis, trans and non-binary women and men

who have faced abuse in their day to day lives. The space to engage and express such forms of dissent and demands is increasingly limited. This is evident in the response to Aurat March 2020 in Islamabad, where members of right-wing groups organized a 'Haya March'. The march ended with protestors from the Haya March pelting stones and attacking the protestors of Aurat March. This clash is also reflective of the kind of tensions and dichotomies that exist on the ground between citizens belonging to different ideologies.

In both these cases the government's response is instrumental in ensuring 'democratic values' for any freedom of engagement to exist. The government's response to the Students Solidarity March is to start a discussion about student unions within a framework defined by the government, which is a reflection of an overarching structure that will continue to limit the nature of engagement of young Pakistanis. The Aurat March organizers ended up getting permission for the march after extensive negotiations with the government, facing initial resistance; the provincial governments also provided additional security. However, whether the miscreants of the attacks on Aurat March Islamabad are prosecuted will reveal the extent to which the present government is creating a space for political engagement through democratic values.

While these two cases reflect Crick's 'active citizen', the 'good citizen' can be found through the Youth Parliament or the National Youth Assembly. The Youth Parliament, while not for profit with no political affiliations, is nonetheless initiated by a celebrity turned politician who is part of the PTI, Abrar-ul-Haq. The aim of the program is to promote political literacy by fostering and guiding 'talent and excellence of adolescents and youth of Pakistan into tangible action and community service'.<sup>13</sup> The National Youth Assembly provides the 'largest youth forum to hold parliamentary sessions' with the aim of training 'future leaders, bureaucrats, social workers, philosophers and responsible citizens'.<sup>14</sup> These projects are important in promoting political literacy, but such literacy will not guarantee freedom of engagement if the parameters of that engagement is defined by the state.

### **Future Possibilities of Political Engagement**

For a truly functioning democracy, freedom of peaceful engagement needs

8. Welzel, C. and Inglehart, R. (2008), "The Role of Ordinary People in Democratization." *Journal of Democracy*, 19:1, pp126-140.

9. Crick, B. (2007), "Citizenship: The Political and the Democratic, *British Journal of Educational Studies*." 55:3, pp. 235-248.

10. *Supra* 2, p.114.

11. *Supra* 1

12. Dawn (2019), "Govt willing to restore student unions after establishment of 'code of conduct': PM Imran." Available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1519856>

13. Youth Parliament. See more at <http://www.youthparliament.org.pk/about.html>

14. National Youth Assembly. See more at <http://www.nya.com.pk>

to be guaranteed as part of the social contract. In Pakistan, while an understanding of political activism, and trust in political institutions might be low amongst the youth, there is a possibility of change, one brought about by movements such as the Students Solidarity March, and Aurat March. These movements are challenging the status quo, organizing on the basis of the lived experiences of young Pakistanis, highlighting their day to day issues, the discrimination that is experienced by students, cis, trans and non-binary

individuals who are denied their rights across Pakistan, discriminated on the basis of their ethnicity, class, religiosity, gender, or sexuality.

These movements provide the ideal of Crick's 'active citizen' instrumental in truly bringing about a change for the betterment of society. The existing government that was elected on 'youth vote' and has attempted to support them through entrepreneurial programs while nonetheless implementing welfare cuts that impact the youth, needs to create a

possibility of dissent through democratic engagement. Charging peaceful young protestors with sedition for exercising their right to free speech and assembly, not only reflects poorly on the existing government but also undermines an opportune moment to strengthen democracy by engaging with a politically active young population, by illustrating for the majority of the political apathetic or indifferent youth that freedom of engagement exists, and can yield results in a democratic Pakistan.



# Entrepreneurship Eco System in Pakistan for Young People



**Yusuf Hussain**

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*“Every generation has underestimated the potential for finding new recipes and ideas. We consistently fail to grasp how many ideas remain to be discovered. Possibilities do not add up. They multiply.”*  
- Paul Romer, Nobel Laureate in Economics, 2018

Entrepreneurship, innovation and technology hold great promise for the youth of Pakistan, but to deliver on the promise, boldness and trust are required from investors, corporations, governments, academicians, and from the youth themselves.

Boldness refers to the gumption to launch and execute strategic projects, meticulously researched, planned, monitored and executed. One example of such a project is Ignite’s five National Incubation Centers (NIC), operationalized in a year and three months, which have graduated over 300 startups that attracted almost seven rupees in private and development sector funding, against every rupee invested by the government. The NIC initiative multiplied the efforts of other successful incubators like Nest I/O, Plan9, NUST Technology Incubation Center (TIC) and Invest to Innovate (i2i), which blazed the path.

Another example is Ignite’s DigiSkills.pk, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered online freelancer training platform, which was able to enrol over one million

trainees in a little over a year. These freelancers, according to a third-party evaluation, are generating over one hundred and ten million dollars a year in foreign exchange earnings. Not bad-considering total project cost was around five million dollars. DigiSkills.pk has helped drive Pakistan into a global leadership role in terms of freelancer growth. A high majority of incubatees and trainees are youth.

At the same time, trust is also required, not just in the promise of entrepreneurship, but also within stakeholders. The World Bank’s Innovation Paradox 2019 Report states that one of the biggest impediments to innovation in developing countries is the lack of adequate engagement between different players in the ecosystem. When each NIC started out graduating twenty five to forty startups annually, there were not necessarily many who were up to the mark, which attracted some criticism. But with every cohort, each NIC improved. In an ideal scenario, an incubator should have started with far fewer startups and then gradually increased the number, but in a government funded program, it is hard to expand later, due to constraining procurement rules. The ability to understand each other’s aspirations, capabilities and limitations is important to each player in the ecosystem.

It is important to classify the types of entrepreneurial opportunities that are available to youth. New businesses, can be of two types: One is innovative, which we can term as “Start-ups”; the other type not so much, which can be termed Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) or Microenterprise. Innovation can be defined as the “transformation of an idea or an invention into a product or service that impacts society.” Much of the affluence, poverty mitigation, lifestyle changes and new jobs over the last few hundred years have been created by transformational innovations like railways, electricity, information technology, and now the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The most valuable corporations in the world today, such as Apple, Amazon and Google, were all start-ups, and now such start-ups are driving economic growth and creating jobs in America, China, Finland, Singapore and other parts of the world.

SME, though not transformational, form the backbone of an economy, due to their large number.

In Pakistan, SMEDA (Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority) is the government agency that promotes SME, which may be shops, dairy farms, gyms, tailoring outfits, or I.T. services firms. While it is possible that SME’s use innovative approaches to distinguish themselves from competition, and scale like a startup, an overwhelming number of SME’s are content to be “lifestyle businesses.” Several multi-lateral agencies and foreign national aid programs provide training and funding for SME and micro-enterprises.

Technology can create a multiplier effect by creating networks of micro-enterprises that have better access to customers, suppliers, and distributors. An increasing number of home businesses, mostly women-led, use Facebook to transact and sell products and services like clothing, jewellery, handbags, and tutoring.

Micro-influencers, who are up-and-coming social media mavens, leverage their large number of followers to sell products for clients. Techlets, a company funded by the Ignite Seed Fund, has now created a marketplace, which links influencers with SME for mutual benefit. Emperors Bazaar, another startup, has created a network of independent artisans. Doch, a female-led NIC Quetta graduate, maintains a network of over three hundred women micro-entrepreneurs who are assigned work through the app. There are other startups that network independent carpenters, electricians and plumbers. While none has graduated yet to a level where it can be considered to have made a major impact, on the lines of say a Task Rabbit in America, one expects that this will happen in the next couple of years. DigiSkills.pk has also trained tens of thousands of freelancers, who can be considered micro-enterprises and who are providing services to several countries in areas like digital marketing, design of logos and brochures, website development and basic digital literacy. Many times, freelancers, who are good at selling, team up with others who are more gifted technically to set up an SME.

This brings us to the topic of the future of work. As these intermediate digital skills are increasingly replaced by AI, Pakistan will need to deepen and broaden its skill set in areas like AI, Internet of Things (IoT), Cyber security, Augmented Reality (AR), and Blockchain. While there are various programs underway to train youth in these skills, including a Presidential initiative, a blended training platform, which combines online engagement with physical classrooms, is again the way to scale.

Knowledge Platform, a startup funded by the Ignite Seed Fund, has provided such blended training in STEM to over a hundred thousand middle schoolers, with significant increase in comprehension of students, evidenced in higher grades. Recently, the company closed a round of funding (Two million dollars), valuing it at eight million dollars. The skills of the future are going to be creativity, empathy, and initiative-as freelancing continuously increases its share with respect to permanent jobs, and AI and Robotics replace procedural, algorithmic work.

Such skills, along with STEM, need to be further encouraged, starting with primary schools. There are a number of startups in the country offering robotic kits that spur such creativity, and Nordic schools have led the way in showing to the world that an empathetic, fun school environment creates more capable citizens than traditional competitive, high pressure academic environments.

Starting from a small base, even in relation to many neighbouring south Asian and middle eastern countries, the Pakistan startup scene has evinced strong growth in the last few years, driven

by rapidly expanding 3G/4G networks, smartphones, internet subscribers and a growing middle class. A significant investment by Ant Financial, part of the Ali Baba Group, into Easy Paisa, a domestic remittances provider, which can be considered a startup, valuing Easy Paisa at almost half a billion dollars, was a seminal event. There are now several entities like the USAID SMEA program, 47Ventures, Sarmayacar, i2i, venture capital funds of major business families like Fatima, Crescent, Elahi and Lakson, and angel investors, offering seed funding in the range of a few hundred thousand dollars. Over the last few years, many startups have graduated to a level where they require Series A funding in the range of a few million dollars. In the past, startups like Pakwheels, Rozee and Zameen have had to put in enormous effort to attract overseas investors. The need for a Pakistan focused Series A fund is paramount.

The government has a key role to play in creating the entrepreneurial ecosystem. While the engagement of the Chinese government in the economy is well known, even the United States government played a critical role in creating Silicon Valley, the pharmaceutical industry and now, nanotechnology. This role included the provision of contracts, funding, tax breaks, and supporting policy at federal, state, and city level. The Indian government launched a one billion six hundred million-dollar startup program in 2015, despite an already relatively advanced startup landscape in terms of funding, valuations, and impact.

In Pakistan, measures needed to improve the environment for startups and SME include: Ease of doing business,

particularly in tax matters and foreign investment, tax breaks and incentives, creation of a payment gateway and micropayment license regime, creating regulatory sandboxes in areas like fintech, availability of credit, establishment of specialty incubators, mandatory award of government contracts including for a major new integrated eGovernment initiative as a public-private partnership, and development of national AI and cyber security strategies. Some recent headway has been made in the first few items, but the trajectory has to continue, and the remaining measures need to be initiated. What is key is that the measures are not piecemeal but are a part of a well thought out bold strategic plan, whose execution is monitored and improved continuously, and where all the players work together well with trust.

The trajectories bode well: the government is increasingly convinced about the importance of entrepreneurship, particularly startups, and is putting necessary infrastructure pieces into place; startup founders are learning from experience and getting better and better; more and more international and local investors are getting interested and investing, spurred by events like the P@SHA annual investment conference. Recently, reputable Silicon Valley VC Fund, First Round Capital, which was an early investor in Uber, invested USD 14 million in Airlift, along with other investors. The acquisition of UAE-based Careem, largely comprising and led by Pakistanis, created a large number of Pakistani millionaires, buoying the perception of startups and equity options in the country. It is thus, an exciting and promising time to be engaged in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Pakistan!

**Case Studies**

**Empowering  
our Youth**

**STORIES OF SUCCESS**

# Social Action to Create a Difference

*“We cannot turn a blind eye towards the ills of our society. We all have the responsibility of making our communities just and peaceful for everyone, irrespective of caste, religion and ethnicity. They might be lesser in number, but they are as equal as any of us Muslims.”*

Maimoona Akhar, a 25-year-old young woman from Peshawar, holds a master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communications from the University of Peshawar. Although Maimoona has been fortunate enough to have lived a comfortable life, she always felt uneasy about the religious intolerance around her. In 2016, when news broke of a Christian boy brutally beaten to death for drinking water from a fountain located in a mosque, Maimoona's perspective changed forever. She thus made it her life's mission to ensure such upsetting incidents do not happen in the future and began working towards a remedy.

She was selected for the six month mentorship programme of UNDP's Youth Empowerment Programme, implemented by the Insan Foundation Trust, for young females on Peace and Security. After a residential workshop she had to design a Social Action Project. She believed that forming a network of like-minded people would be a good start towards addressing this grave issue.

Maimoona thus utilized her communications degree and created a Facebook page called 'Peace Promoters'. The concept behind the page was to create a platform where young peace and tolerance activists from across the country, belonging to any religious or ethnic groups, could come together and highlight the commonalities of various religions. She was mentored by leading female peace and security experts in order to ensure her efforts were effective.

Soon, young Christian, Hindu, Sikh and representatives of other religious and ethnic groups started joining and the network started growing. Within a couple of months of initiating this page, over 200 members joined and started actively engaging with each other on ways of promoting peace and tolerance.

Maimoona and other members of 'Peace Promoters' decided to practically expand on the peace dialogue and came up with the idea of visiting religious sanctuaries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), with anyone willing to join and learn about different religions and their values. In a span of few months, and with the support of the network, Maimoona has been able to organize multiple visits to mosques, shrines, temples, churches, and gurdwaras. Now, Maimoona plans a visit on the last Saturday of each month and the attendance keeps increasing with each visit.

Her efforts are being recognized at the national and international level, and Peace Promoters has been picked by numerous television channels and newspaper outlets, including Voice of America. Maimoona now wants to formally register Peace Promoters so that she can apply for grants and expand on her practical work of fostering tolerance and peace in the society. She is thankful to UNDP for giving her the opportunity to learn how she can play her part in ensuring an inclusive society.

## UNDP Uplifting Youth by Investing in 3-Es

In a follow up to the development challenges identified in the National Human Development Report 2017, UNDP Pakistan launched the Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP), built along the lines of the 3-E's i.e. employment, education and engagement. The program lays a multi-pronged strategy that aims at creating a facilitating environment for youth in conflict affected areas, to emerge as agents of positive change and development.

Through the implementation of the programme, UNDP seeks to work with the Government of Pakistan as well as directly with excluded youth and other key stakeholders, to ensure that 'equal opportunities exist for all youth to participate in Pakistan's social, political and economic development processes so that all youth feel an empowered part of society with a stage in its future'.

While the YEP program has managed to garner immense positive impact, a few success stories are highlighted.



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# Learning to use the computer for income generation

Young people in conflict with the law form one of the most vulnerable populations of youth in Pakistan. Alleged involvement in criminal activities along with life in poorly equipped and retributive prison systems, diminish a prisoner's dignity and attach a stigma of criminality with him/her, thereby undermining possibilities of social and economic reintegration after release. Supported by the Government of Japan, UNDP is addressing this issue under its Youth Empowerment Programme by providing psychological counselling, livelihood skills trainings, and non-formal education to 100 young detainees (aged 15 to 29 years), in the Youthful Offenders Industrial School (YOIS), Malir District Prison, and Women's Prison in Karachi. The said skills and personal development interventions, supported by the Government of Japan, aim at reducing young people's vulnerability to involvement in violence and criminal activities by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to function as productive and responsible citizens after release.

Ahmed is a 16 year old detainee at the YOIS. Before being jailed in the juvenile detention centre over charges of theft, Ahmed spent his time roaming the streets of Karachi with a group of friends. Most of his time and savings from odd jobs was spent on video games and internet surfing. The latter mostly involved watching pornographic videos in net cafes in the informal settlements of the city. Ahmed lost all sense of purpose after being incarcerated in the YOIS because of very limited opportunities for constructive activities. This changed when Ahmed enrolled in a digital literacy programme for young detainees under YEP.

According to the digital skills instructor, Ahmed quickly learnt the basic use of Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. He also had a natural talent for drawing and sketching using Microsoft Paint. In this regard, Ahmed was able to learn all the use of these softwares more quickly than his fellow inmates with formal education. With more skills and careful life choices (assisted through psychological counselling under YEP), Ahmed will be able to use his skills for earning a livelihood as a graphic designer.

*"I always used the computer for entertainment and unhealthy activities and never realized that it can be used for earning money. I am very happy to have completed my training. I will use my skills to work as a graphic designer after release."*



# From Being a Teacher to a Business Owner

*"My business is doing so well and I am in a better position to support my parents!" - Palwasha*

Palwasha Zaib, 18, hails from the rural settlements of a small town in Haripur, KP. From an early age, Palwasha had to contribute to the household income, as her father had been unemployed due to severe health issues, and her younger brother was enrolled in school.

Palwasha completed her intermediate education and started working along with her mother as a teacher in a vocational centre, where she taught beautician courses to students. Despite teaching at the centre, she was unable to utilize her skills properly and only made meagre income.

Meanwhile, she heard about the 'Entrepreneurship Training for Youth' program, which was being conducted by Kashf Foundation under UNDP Pakistan's Youth Empowerment Programme, and enrolled herself. The five-day training provided her with valuable entrepreneurial skills and business tips. Along with this, she was also able to secure a loan from Kashf Foundation to set up her own beauty parlour. Palwasha utilized her learnings from the training and started operating her own parlour from home. Soon afterwards, she also started giving beautician courses for women in her community. Now, her steady client-base as well as students, has significantly increased her monthly income.



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**Box Feature**

# **Empowering our Youth**

**GENERATION UNLIMITED  
PAKISTAN**

# Generation Unlimited Pakistan-Engaging Young People to Build their Futures

**Note: The box feature has been contributed by UNICEF**

Launched in September 2018, Generation Unlimited (GenU) is a global, multi-sector partnership that empowers young people to become productive and engaged members of society by connecting secondary-age education and training to employment and entrepreneurship. Generation Unlimited believes that if the largest generation of young people in history is prepared for the transition to work, the potential for global progress is unlimited.

Pakistan is among the first 16 front-runner countries for GenU at the national level, and the second youngest country in the South Asian region. In 2019, it was estimated that 65.4 million young people (33.8 million males and 31.6 million females) are in the 10-24 years age cohort.<sup>1</sup> This “youth bulge” provides unique challenges as well as opportunities for the country’s social and economic progress. In order for the youth bulge to become a demographic dividend, it is pertinent to improve their access to education, training and employment opportunities.

Currently, in Pakistan, the indicators on education, employment and training are not promising. According to estimates, the gross enrollment rates in primary, middle and secondary schools in Pakistan are 97 percent, 55 percent and 34 percent respectively, translating to 34.2 million children and adolescents in formal education.

The situation is further complicated by the almost 23 million school-aged children and adolescents aged 5-16 years (44 percent of the school-aged population) who are out-of-school. Out of the total 42.6 million young people aged 15-24 years, 31 percent are not in education, employment or in any form of training. The unemployment rate among this group is 7.9.<sup>2</sup> According to government estimates, about three million young people enter the job market each year but the technical and vocational education training (TVET) sector accommodates less than half a million trainees annually in its more than <sup>3,500</sup> institutes across the country.

In order to harness the potential of this youth bulge, the government has initiated various programs including education sector reforms, skills and training reforms, and Prime Minister’s Kamayab Jawan program. Analysis shows that current initiatives and investments for young people in Pakistan are focused on the age group 18 to 29 years. The landscape shows a disconnect between education, skills development and employment through a life cycle approach, especially for those under the age of 18 years.

Considering this, the aim of GenU Pakistan is to create a movement to help prepare young people, particularly adolescent girls and boys (10-19 years), acquire the education and skills training required to build their futures and engage as productive citizens.

For this purpose, in collaboration with the Ministry for Federal Education and Professional Training, and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) as secretariat, GenU Pakistan has brought together partners from government, multilateral organizations, civil society, the private sector and young people from around the country, to discuss how they can meet the urgent need for expanded education, training and employment opportunities for young people on an unprecedented scale.

GenU’s value proposition for Pakistan is to:

- Reduce the population of out-of-school adolescents, aged 10-19 years
- Offer opportunities for adolescents to acquire the minimum qualifications and foundational skills, including numeracy and literacy, required to enrol in skills training or enter formal education
- Enable the readiness of adolescents (10-19 years) to access the different youth development and skills training opportunities
- Improve transitions for adolescents to the different education and skill development initiatives, and eventually to the world of work
- Mobilize public and private sector interest and investment for education and skills development

Under GenU Pakistan, various platforms are being formed: GenU Pakistan Champions for social influencers, Friends of GenU for the private sector, and a We the Future Group with young people.

In this regard, the ‘We the Future Group’ is envisioned as a major platform to give voice to young people and bring them at the center of the localization process. This co-creation and consultation forum for young people will be constituted once GenU is formally launched in Pakistan. Through creating a conducive environment, the “We the Future Group” will ensure that communities and public authorities provide space for active engagement, participation and voice of young people on issues that concern their own lives.

The Group aims to serve as an incubator of innovative ideas and co-creation through its link to the Global GenU Youth Challenge. The Youth Challenges call on young innovators to design solutions to improve education, employment and civic engagement. It aims to inspire young people with brilliant ideas, but without the resources to bring them to life. This includes young refugees, those who face discrimination due to ethnicity, gender or disability, and those who are disadvantaged by poverty.

1. World Population Review, Pakistan Population by Age, (2019). Available at <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/pakistan-population/#undefined>

2. International Labour Organization figures (2018).

**Interview**

# **Empowering our Youth**

**Q&A WITH THE EXPERTS**

# Interview



## Saad Hamid

Community Manager  
Developer Relations and Ecosystem, Google

### In your opinion what are the greatest impediments in Pakistan to realize its youth potential?

There are three main impediments in Pakistan stopping its youth to realize its potential: lack of connectivity, poor quality of education, and lack of job/career security.

For example, firstly, only 35 percent of Pakistan's population has access to internet thereby reflecting poor internet connectivity access to youth. As the world progresses to engage more through digital platforms for education, entertainment and empowerment, seen in the post-COVID-19 world, the unconnected youth of the country is at a greater disadvantage. There seems to be a digital divide within the population and within youth as well.

Second, there also seems to be a big gap in the quality of education across the country. Even in major cities, a stark difference in the quality of education provided by public and private sector schools and colleges is evident. Furthermore, as the cost of education remains a challenge, good schools/colleges can only be afforded by the affluent class; hence depriving youth from lower and middle classes to access quality education.

Lastly, due to the challenging state of the country and economy, Pakistani youth have never had security of career and life. Young people, especially from urban cities, flock to find a home abroad with better opportunities and job security. If we can create a better and secure environment for young people here in Pakistan, there will be less of 'brain drain' and young people would be able to utilize their skills and knowledge by remaining in their home country to build a better Pakistan together.

### How can the current educational/vocational skill infrastructure be optimally utilized for enhancing the skill set and abilities of youth to improve their well-being?

Pakistan has a great infrastructure for educational and vocational skill building which is comprised of contributions from both the private and public sector. However, the challenge of these current programs is that they are not very aligned to the needs of the digital market and are producing talent with skills which has low or outdated demand in the market.

The first thing that needs to be done is that these programs should update the curriculum to introduce new courses which allow youth to focus on skills that connect them to jobs of the future. Simultaneously, given the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, there should be massive digital transformation which allows youth to acquire training from home. Similar to most training programs in the world, location or physical presence

## say that again

*"...Going forward, local policies and interventions need to have an action plan; understanding how connected youth can be given access to Internet and how to create more opportunities by connecting them to the world."*

should no longer serve to be a requirement for such trainings.

### In your opinion, what impact will COVID-19 have on young Pakistanis in terms of disruptions faced in their education, employment, and engagement?

COVID-19 will exacerbate the existing huge divide amongst young people. Those who have access to good connectivity will continue their learning and education; while those without it will face a 'learning lag' and eventually this lag will cause disadvantaged youth to be left behind in education and opportunities.

Employment is another area which will increase as a result of this divide. As most businesses have shifted to work-from-home mode under the current situation, this will create more working opportunities for youth who have internet connectivity and are digitally savvy, while those not equipped with technology or unable to learn this trade will be left behind to take up lesser paying jobs and will also be at the risk of getting affected by the virus in case their work requires physical presence.

### What role can different stakeholders such as government, civil society, and development partners play in reducing this impact on youth in times of crisis?

Now, more than ever, the government needs to come together with civil society, development partners and the private sector to figure out and create a strategy for youth for the next five years. This is also the best time to explore more Public-Private Partnership (PPP) opportunities: the government can provide the infrastructure, reach and scale, while the private sector and civil society can come together to provide solutions, innovations, knowledge, speed and best practices, in order to create solutions that will help youth in this time of crisis.

### Moving forward, what local policies or interventions need to be implemented to facilitate youth empowerment by adopting innovative methods, in light of global best practices?

The pandemic has shown us that connectivity or the lack thereof can create a huge digital divide. Going forward, local policies and interventions need to have an action plan; understanding how connected youth can be given access to internet and how to create more opportunities by connecting them to the world. Whereas for those who are not connected, there is a need to create mechanisms to help them get connected. Given that Pakistan has 60 percent of its population under 30 and only 35 percent of the 220 million population is connected with the internet, 'Connected vs Unconnected' youth should be the center discussion for any policy, program going forward.,

## say that again

*“..While there are a lot of good initiatives and funds working towards this cause, to make the ecosystem ‘youth friendly’ they need to be accessible as well.”*



## Nighat Dad

Executive Director, Digital Rights Foundation  
TED Global Fellow

### **In your opinion, what challenges exist in providing youth the education, environment, investment and skill set to make the entrepreneurship ecosystem friendlier for youth?**

According to multiple sources, 63 percent of Pakistan’s population is under the age of 25. There is a lot of potential here to find and nurture entrepreneurs, however when it comes to creating an ecosystem for them, the issue comes down to scale. Currently, the model we’re seeing in Pakistan is prone to elite capture, and works in favour of those who have certain privileges. To truly make a healthy ecosystem, we need to make conscious efforts to reach out to people from different backgrounds and interests, and secure funding for them.

While there are a lot of good initiatives and funds working towards this cause, to make the ecosystem ‘youth friendly’ they need to be accessible as well.

### **How can the current educational/vocational skill infrastructure be optimally utilized for enhancing the skill set and abilities of youth to improve their well-being?**

Currently our education system is geared towards rote learning, and also learning that is outside of real world contexts and scenarios. Education, at every level, must work in a way that helps students prepare for the real world, and their lives outside of schooling.

The education system needs to think of skills and passions that they can instill in their students, some of these should be based on what future trends in the world look like. There truly needs to be a synergy between what children are learning in classrooms and what is happening in the world around them.

### **In your opinion, what impact will COVID-19 have on young Pakistanis in terms of disruptions faced in their education, employment, and engagement?**

The impact of COVID-19 on the youth of the country will be felt differently on the basis of economic background. Those with certain privileges will still be able to access education and employment as and when the opportunity arises. Additionally, these people will most likely have a safety net from their family’s end.

On the other end, for schools and universities with little access to advanced internet facilities, or for students living in areas with unstable internet connections, COVID-19 presents itself as a major block in their educational journey. These students also have a lot of family pressure to immediately provide for their families, or for female students, the pressure of marriage begins to build up after a certain age. This pandemic could lead to a lot of students not returning the next academic year, since the economic cost may be too high for some families.

### **What role can different stakeholders such as government, civil society, and development partners play in reducing this impact on youth in times of crisis?**

There needs to be an active lobby advocating for government to support schools and colleges to provide more scholarships for less fortunate students. Also, there should be pressure building on authorities to help support out of work recent graduates, and also the youth who were laid off because of the pandemic.

### **Moving forward, what local policies or interventions need to be implemented to facilitate youth empowerment by adopting innovative methods and global best practices?**

The following recommendations may be considered:

- There need to be more youth centric events and trainings focused on different skills and skillsets;
- It should be mandatory for schools to teach classes on how to use technology effectively and equip students with basic tech skills;
- On a government level, there should be grants and prizes that encourage students to think of new businesses and/or research ideas;
- On the level of bureaucracy, it should be made easier for the youth to establish businesses and firms in the country, maybe giving them incentives, such as tax breaks or grants; and,
- Schools and colleges need to work with local lawmakers to encourage a spirit of research and/or entrepreneurship in the youth from a young age, through classes, competitions, internships etc.

# Interview



## Umair Javed

Assistant Professor of Politics and Sociology  
Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)

### **In your opinion, what are the greatest impediments for Pakistan to realize its youth potential?**

If realization of potential here is defined as the ability to create and then meet material and intellectual aspirations, then amongst the biggest impediments is the absence of sustained, stable and employment-generating economic growth that can absorb an increasing urban youth population. The impediments also include ideological and cultural restraints placed not just by inter-generational relationships, but by the state and its associated authority figures as well.

### **How can the current educational/vocational skill infrastructure be optimally utilized for enhancing the skill set and abilities of youth to improve their well-being?**

Public sector educational institutions need to be funded adequately. In addition, for them to provide the requisite facilities and resources that allow young people to access a broad base of knowledge, higher levels of global exposure and access to tools and instruments is needed across various disciplines. Vocational centres need to be providing courses that are demand-driven, linked to market trends and can facilitate employment attainment. Overall, the thrust of education should be both vocational as well as one that seeks to enhance intellectual and cultural breadth.

### **In your opinion, what impact will COVID-19 have on young Pakistanis in terms of disruptions faced in their education, employment, and engagement?**

Apart from the adaptation to online learning, which has its own set of problems structured along lines of class-based access, gender, and geography, the disruption to educational institutes as

## say that again

*“...At this point, the biggest responsibility lies with the government in ensuring that socio economic and learning disruptions are minimized.”*

platforms of socialization, peer-to-peer engagement and interaction, and mentoring is also quite significant. These cannot be adequately reproduced in a remote setting. More broadly, the adverse impact of COVID-19 on the economy will reduce the amount of stable, formal-sector opportunities that are so central to the realization of socio-economic mobility and aspiration.

### **What role can different stakeholders such as government, civil society, and development partners play in reducing this impact on youth in times of crisis?**

At this point, the biggest responsibility lies with the government in ensuring that socio-economic and learning disruptions are minimized. This means reaching out with greater social protection and welfare measures and assessing existing fiscal priorities to meet these requirements. Civil society can play, at best, a complementary role by providing e-solutions, and possibly, outlets for young people to contribute towards community relief and welfare provision.

### **Moving forward, what local policies or interventions need to be implemented to facilitate youth empowerment by adopting innovative methods, in light of global best practices?**

More focus on improving the state of undergraduate education and vocational training in the country is much needed. It would be helpful if these learning opportunities serve as a pivot to a learning experience that imparts hard and soft skills (I.T, data analysis, critical thinking, communications) which allows young people to bypass inefficiencies in the domestic labour market. Political representation and greater institutional channels for vocalizing the concerns of young people is yet another urgent need for Pakistan.

**DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE**  
**PAKISTAN**