

Tokyo Democracy Forum 2021

Pakistan Monitoring Report – National

April 15, 2021

Authors and Organizations

AwazCDS-Pakistan:

Established in 1995 and is registered as not for profit organization with registrar joint stock companies under Societies Registration Act 1860 and enjoys special consultative status with United Nation's Economic & Social Council (UN ECOSOC). AwazCDS-Pakistan's core mission is to develop integrated and innovative solutions in cooperation with partners at all levels to secure the future of marginalized communities especially by creating rightful spaces and choices of life. For more information please visit: www.awazcde.org.pk

Pakistan Development Alliance:

Established in 2014, is an alliance of 107 national level NGOs/Networks working together through developmental and rights based approaches to address issues in governance and accountability across the country especially in the implementation of SDGs. The alliance is led by AwazCDS-Pakistan and is governed by elected national, provincial and regional executive committees at national, provincial and regional level. PDA is part of various national, regional and global alliances and forums including Asia Development Alliance (ADA), Asia CSOs Partnership for Sustainable Development (APSD), Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD), Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), CIVICUS/AGNA- Affinity Group of National Associations and Transparency Accountability and Partnerships-TAP Network etc. For more information please visit: www.pda.net.pk

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Executive Summary

Pakistan is a Muslim majority country situated at an important geo-strategic location between China, Iran, Afghanistan and India in South Asian region. It remained under military dictatorship for almost 35 years during several times since its independence in 1947, whereas rest of the period the people witnessed hybrid democratic regimes. Today, Pakistan is the fifth most populated country in the world, with projected population of 216.6 million in 2019 (Population Reference Bureau). The country's high population growth rate, which stood at 2.4 % for the period 1998 – 2017, has been impacting the rate of urbanization and migration and almost all aspects of socio-economic life in the country. The total fertility rate is at 3.6 children per woman, with significant differentials among income groups. About two thirds of the population is under the age of 30, with a median age of 22. The large share of young people offers an opportunity to accelerate development known as the demographic dividend. But it largely depends on prioritizing investments in young people's health, education, employment, participation and social security.

Even though Pakistan attained middle-income status and the per capita GDP of Pakistan in 2020 constituted \$1,365, social and health indicators are comparable to those of least developed countries. The spectra of gender inequality is large. According to World Economic Forum, Pakistan Gender Inequality Index ranks 151 out of 153 countries (2020). 32 per cent of ever-married women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence; 29 % of women were married before 18 years of age. Pakistan stands at 6th place with 1,909,000 child brides.

According to the UNDP's Human Development Index 2020 Pakistan is ranked 150th where 22.80 million children are out of schools. Pakistan is among two countries of the world which are not polio free yet including Nigeria. Local government system is non-functional therefore the citizens' participation is very low and Pakistan is rated Partly Free in the recent Global Freedom House Report whereas it is INACTIVE in the Open Government Partnership. Pakistan is again placed in the grey list of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in 2018 following the similar actions were taken in 2008, 2012 to 2015 because money laundering and terror financing. Civic spaces are shrinking and CIVICUS Monitor has ranked Pakistan in REPRESSED countries whereas Civil Society Index 2020 ranked Pakistan in EVOLVING category. Freedom of expression and speech, right to information are constitutional rights under Article 19 and 19A respectively but laws and policies of state authorities related to these constitutional rights are derogatory. Right to information act is not applicable to Parliamentarians and military institutions. Very recently, Pakistani government has passed a new set of laws it says targets "terrorism and fake news" on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Critics say the rules open the door to mass censorship.

Pakistan is signatory of almost all major global commitments including CEDAW, CRPD, CRC, ICCPR etc. and has very recently adopted agenda 2030 for social transformation in September 2015. Pakistan has already presented its VNR report on SDGs during HLPF2019 however it has reversed its commitment for second VNR report in the forthcoming HLPF 2021. Pakistan has presented last UPR in 2017 however its progress on follow up of recommendations is very

slow. The current and yet another hybrid democratic regime of Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (Pakistan Justice Movement) came in to power as a result of general elections in July 2018. The new government had to face many socio-economic and political challenges in her early days including COVID -19.

The government immediately established National Command & Operation Centre (NCOC) to deal with this issue. Countrywide lock down was avoided by the government and partial and smart lock down strategy was adopted after initial month long lock down in April 2020. Government also announced and delivered stimulus package of almost USD 8 billion to facilitate marginalized and poor community, construction / textile industry and other sectors during partial and smart lock downs. State Bank of Pakistan announced effective measures including almost 7% gradual decrease in interest rates to encourage investors. CSOs / NGOs / INGOs were also allowed to work without NOCs and MOUs during COVID lock downs. 10.2 million destitute, poor and women headed families, were given USD 75 for three months to meet their usual needs during COVID lockdowns. Millions of people lost their jobs and millions lost their businesses especially gig economy workers, small and medium businesses and laborers, transgender community, people living with disabilities and minorities suffered the most. Minorities were ignored by many charities of religio-political parties by saying that our charity and support is illegitimate for non-Muslims. Women headed families and PLWDs families were also left behind and deprived of support provided by both government and civil society. Violence against women and children increased significantly during the lock down period. Health Care Providers (HCPs) suffered a lot in the beginning and almost 500 died during this fight against pandemic. HCPs were provided with personal protection equipment upon their protest. Salute HCPs campaign was also run at state level by the government and HCPs dying of COVID 19 during duty were given the status of Martyr.

Pakistan is considered as a success story among the developing nations for addressing the COVID pandemic appropriately. There are some policy level and some structural reasons behind this success. At policy level avoidance of panic and countrywide lock down situation helped to control wide spread of COVID-19 from urban centers to rural areas. More than 65% of Pakistan's population lives in rural areas with no modern housing structures so they remained safe. Immediate announcement and timely delivery of economic stimulus package also worked and paid off in addressing COVID 19 impacts. Pakistan kept its economy open and also allowed the civil society to come forward for the support of government and people. At structural level Pakistan's 70% population is below the age of 30, whereas only less than 20% are elderly so this might have contributed in low mortality rate during COVID 19. Furthermore Pakistan is highly conservative culture where more than 48% population (women) have limited mobility or exposure so it also contributed in lower rate of COVID 19 spread in Pakistan. Since the third wave of COVID-19 is in full swing in Pakistan as well as in South Asian region, therefore a robust sensitization campaign for public awareness required to be launched through media and civil society based on the past learning & experience. Multi-stakeholder's consultative processes need to be initiated to understand impacts of COVID-19 on human development policies and structures at national and regional level to suggest appropriate and doable way forward.

Abbreviations & Acronyms

ADA	Asia Development Alliance
AGNA	Affinity Group of National Associations
A J & K	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
ANR	Afghan National Registration
APSD	Asia CSOs Partnership for Sustainable Development
A4SD	Action for Sustainable Development
AwazCDS	Awaz Centre for Development Services
BCG	Bacille Calmette-Guerin
BHUs	Basic Health Units
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLFSA	Comprehensive Food Security and Livelihood Assessment
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRTI	Coalition of Right to Information
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CNICs	Computerized National Identity Cards
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ECC	Economic Coordination Committee
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
FIA	Federal Investigation Authority
FY	For Year
GB	Gilgit Baltistan
GCAP	Global Call to Action against Poverty
GDP	Gross domestic product
HRCP	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
EmONC	Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IHC	Islamabad High Court
IHR	International Health Regulations
ILO	International Labor Organization
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
KMDF	Kathmandu Democracy Forum
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MERS-CoV	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome-related Coronavirus
MoHR	Ministry of Human Rights
MoUs	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
NAB	National Accountability Bureau
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NAP	National Action Plan

NCHR	National Commission for Human Rights
NCOC	National Command and Operation Center
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NJPMC	National Judicial Policy Making Committee
NMDs	Newly Merged Districts
NoCs	Non Objection Certificates
NSC	National Security Committee
OGP	Open Government Partnership
OPD	Out Patient Department
PBA	Pakistan Banks Association
PCHR	Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights
PDA	Pakistan Development Alliance
PECA	Prevention of Electronic Crime Act
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
PKRs	Pakistani Rupees
PM	Prime Minister
PoEs	Privately owned Enterprises
PoR	Proof of Registration
PPEs	Personal Protection Equipment
PRG	Parliamentary Research Group
PWSN	Persons with Specific Needs
PWDs	Person With Disability
RHCs	Rural Health Centers
RTI	Right to Information
SARS-CoV	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEDA	Social & Economic Development Association
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SRH	Sexual & Reproductive Health
TAP	Transparency Accountability and Partnerships
TB	Tuberculosis
TGs	Transgenders
TV	Television
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UN	United Nation's
UN ECOSOC	United Nation's Economic & Social Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	United States Dollar
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WHO	World Health Organization

Websites and References about COVID-19, SDGs, and Human Rights

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<http://nhnpakistan.org/>

F. Other Useful Website

<https://nacta.gov.pk/>

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Main Section

A. Data and Trends about COVID-19

A.1 COVID-19 Pandemic Chronology from January 1, 2020 to April 15, 2021

Date	Global / National Events
2019	
Dec. 31	China - 27 cases suspicious of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China discovered and reported
2020	
Jan 29	Four Pakistani students studying in China were tested positive for COVID-19
Jan 30	WHO declares “Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)”
Feb 23	Pakistan closes its border with Iran after 43 cases were reported in Iran
Feb 26	First two cases of COVID 19 were officially confirmed by PM Special Assistant on health
March 2	Pakistan closed its border with Afghanistan
March 10	Sindh provincial government imposed temporary ban on marriage halls, tea stalls, after 11: 15 at night
March 11	WHO Declares Pandemic
March 11	Pakistani consulate in Milan, Italy announced first death of a Pakistani in Brescia
March 13	Pakistan stopped all international flight operations except for Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore
March 13	National Security Council decided that all educational institutions remained closed until April 5, 2020
March 13	Parliament of Pakistan suspended its legislative business due to COVID 19
March 16	Pakistan reached first 100 cases of COVID 19
March 16	Pakistan completely sealed its borders with China
March 16	Local and higher judiciary announced lockdown – only urgent and important civil and criminal nature cases were to be heard until August 2020.
March 17	Pakistan Super League (Cricket Tournament) postponed
March 18	First two deaths due to COVID 19 reported in Pakistan
March 21	All types and national and international, intercity air / road travel banned
March 21	Shopping malls, markets, offices , public areas and parks were closed officially
March 24	Three Provinces announced lock down
March 24	Prime Minister approved PKRs 1.2 trillions (USD 8 Billion) economic relief packages
March 25	Pakistan reached first 1000 cases of COVID 19
March 27	Prime Minister announced youth Tiger Force to help government against the spread of COVID 19 nationwide
April 2	National Command & Operation Centre (NCOC) was established to combat COVID 19
April 10	Government started delivering Ehsaas cash grants of PKRs 12000 to 12 million destitute families for three months
April 12	Pakistan announced to bring back 4000 stranded Pakistanis from across the world through special flights
April 15	Deaths of 100 people reported due to COVID 19 in Pakistan
April 21	Pakistan re-opened its air space and airports for international travels
April 22	Pakistan reached 10000 cases of COVID 19

May 7	It was reported that more than 500 health care providers in Pakistan are infected by COVID 19
May 9	Lock down ended in Pakistan
May 10	Smart lockdown announced across the country based on COVID situation
May 11	Parliament of Pakistan resumed its business to discuss COVID 19 situation
May 21	Death toll reached up to 1000 people
June 8	Pakistan reached 100000 cases of COVID 19
June 14	Highest number of COVID case 6825 reported in one day
June 20	Pakistan opened up its borders with Afghanistan, China and Iran after COVID 19
June 20	The highest number of deaths in one day was 153
June 28	Pakistan reached 200,000 cases of COVID 19
July 10	Death toll reached up to 5000 due to COVID 19
July 12	Regional Assembly elections in Gilgit Baltistan State postponed
August 10	Market shopping malls, hotels, parks and other public places opened up in Pakistan
August 10	Number of cases reported 539 as on the day when lockdown lifted
September 11	Pakistan reached 300,000 cases of COVID 19
September 15	Lock down on educational institutions lifted
September 15	Number of COVID cases 404 as of the educational lock down was lifted
September 23	Gilgit Baltistan Assembly elections re-announced to be held on November 15, 2020
October 10	Total number of cases reach up to 318932
October 10	Total number of recovered cases 303458
October 10	Total number of death 6570
October 10	Micro lockdown was imposed in Karachi areas until October 15, 2020
October 10	Micro lockdown imposed in some parts of Islamabad
December 31	Pakistan announced purchase of 1.2 million doses of Sinopharm from China
2021	
January 9	Pakistan established its first COVID Vaccine Centre at Islamabad
January 10	NCOC Pakistan opened up the registration process for the vaccination of front line health care providers
January 18	Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) approved the use of Sinopharm vaccine in COVID emergency
January 21	Pakistan announced that it will receive 500000 doses of Sinopharm COVID vaccine from China free of cost
January 31	COVAX announced that Pakistan will receive 17 million Astra Zeneca COVID vaccine doses free of cost
February 1	Pakistan received first shipment of 500000 doses of Sinopharm
February 2	First person inoculated in Pakistan
February 16	Registration of people above 65 started for COVID vaccine
March 5	197000 doses was administered among frontline healthcare providers
March 18	It was revealed that COVID vaccine is also available in the private market
March 25	Educational lock down announced in 18 high risk districts of Pakistan until April 15 , 2021
March 30	Registration of people above 50 started for COVID vaccine

April 1	Pakistan received another consignment of 500000 doses of Sinopharm from China
April 15	Inter city movement of transport stopped for Saturdays and Sundays

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In Pakistan capacity of public healthcare system to contain or manage COVID-19 crisis was extremely limited and was getting increasingly overwhelmed. Public and private diagnostics centres had limited facilities to undertake tests of suspected cases which are significantly rising.

Pakistan’s National Security Committee (NSC) meeting was held to discuss the looming healthcare crisis and have taken key decision about the formation of National Command & Operation Centre (NCOC)¹ for COVID-19, giving leading role to NDMA, closing education institutes, borders sealing, restrictions on international traveling, banning all types of gatherings, reaching out Islamic scholars, suspension of courts proceedings, and comprehensive food security planning.²

On 23rd March 2020, Pakistan Government had announced complete lockdown and decided to deploy army troops nationwide to reinforce measures against coronavirus. According to a notification by the Interior Ministry, the troops will work with provincial governments to ensure a lockdown in the country. During the lockdown, citizens were only allowed to step out of their homes for buying grocery and hospital visits.³

On 27th of March 2020 Prime Minister of Pakistan launched [Ehsaas Program](#) to provide emergency cash grants of PKRs 12000 (USD 75) for 12 million households across the country. The cash grants distributions was completed through banks by August 2020. Further to this on March 31st 2020 PM also announced PKRs 1.2 trillion (USD 8 billion) [Prime Minister Corona Response Package](#) to support affected people and industry. Moreover, a special fund was also created to encourage philanthropist especially Pakistani diaspora to contribute in [Prime Minister’s Relief Fund for COVID-19](#). Other than this the Prime Minister had also created the [Corona Relief Tiger Force](#) on April 7th 2020 and more than [one million youth](#) have been registered online to support government in this corona emergency situation. One of the major purpose of the Corona Relief Tiger Force was to make sure the food supply at the doorsteps amid lockdown period. A detailed **Chronology of Events in Pakistan** since the COVID19 regime already mentioned above.

¹ <https://ncoc.gov.pk/>

² <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/10-steps-pakistan-is-taking-to-contain-coronavirus-1.70403640>

³ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistan-deploys-army-to-assist-in-covid-19-measures/1776226>

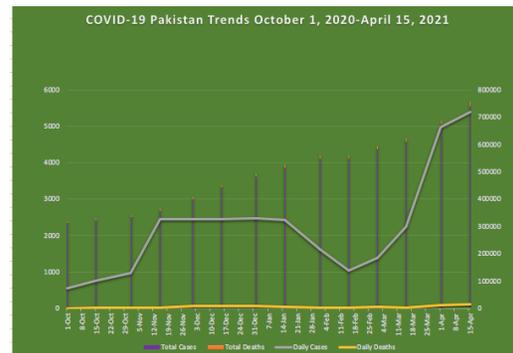
A.2 National Data & Trends about COVID-19:

According to [Pakistan COVID-19 Dashboard](#) updated by Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination - Government of Pakistan by April 15 2021, cases of COVID-19 have reached up to 739818. So far, there are 15872 deaths are reported across Pakistan.⁴ The below table and graph derived from the Worldometer⁵ also shares fortnightly trend about cases and deaths until April 15, 2021.

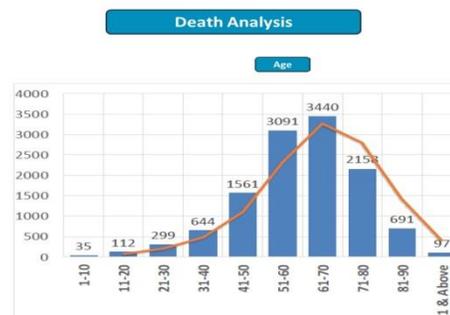
	Total Cases	Total Deaths	Daily Cases	Daily Deaths
01-Oct	312806	6484	543	5
15-Oct	321218	6614	755	13
01-Nov	333970	7084	977	18
15-Nov	356904	7415	2443	33
01-Dec	400482	8091	2458	66
15-Dec	443246	8905	2459	73
01-Jan	482178	10176	2463	71
15-Jan	514338	10863	2417	45
01-Feb	546428	11683	1615	26
15-Feb	546077	12333	1048	26
01-Mar	581365	12896	1392	36
01-April	672931	14530	4974	96
15-April	739818	15872	5395	118

The below graph derived from the above table share the trend of COVID -19 crisis in Pakistan.

Highest deaths are recoded on April 15, 2021 at 118 during the third wave of COVID-19. Daily deaths are also trending high with every passing day. Earlier highest number of COVID cases in the country were recorded in November 2020 and the graph shows flatten status until January 2021. The number of COVID -19 cases were recorded at the lowest level in February 2021 and the third wave started in March 2021 and a rising trend is being noticed on daily basis. Educational lock down was again imposed on March 25th 2021.



As far as death trends are concerned, children of age 1-10 years and elderly people of age above 91 were least affected whereas people of age between 51-80 years were most affected. Highest death trend (3440) was noticed in the people of 61-70 years. The number of deaths among young people of age 21-30 years were greater (299) than the young people of age 11-20 years (112).



⁴ <http://covid.gov.pk/>

⁵ <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/pakistan/>

This is pertinent to mention that Pakistan was considered as one of the best case study to manage the COVID -19 crises due to several policy and structural⁶ level realities as mentioned in the below self-explanatory diagrams , however the upwards trends started in March 2021 during the third wave inspired by so called UK variant of COVID -19.



Policies of keeping the economy open, smart lock down strategy and providing support to poor community through Ehsaas Cash grants as well as food support through food banks (langar Khanas) are still continuing. Rural areas are still not reported to be suffered by COVID-19 despite the fact that people are not following the protection SOPs (masks and physical distancing). Structural opportunities especially youth bulge and low rise urban design as well as non-central heating and cooling systems are still curtailing the high prevalence of COVID-19 in Pakistan.

A.3 Vaccination Status:

Pakistan kicked off inoculation of COVID-19 vaccination on February 2021 after receiving one million doses of Sinopharm vaccine as a gift from China. Healthcare providers and people above the age of 60 were registered first. Since more than 47% of Pakistan’s population is below the age of 18 years and all together 70% is below the age of 30 years, therefore an immediate need of vaccine is for 30% of 220 million which are nearly 80 million people. By March 31, 2021 only 0.8 million vaccines were administered that benefited to 0.4 million people only⁷.

According to the most recent survey conducted by Gallup Pakistan only 38% people have shown their commitment to get COVID-19 vaccine whereas 49% people have said No to the COVID-19 vaccine. Pakistan however will have 17 million doses of free vaccines from COVAX⁸ by the end of April 2021 that will be suffix for around 20 million people. Bharat Biotech (Indian) vaccine is much cheaper (US\$2.83) par dose but Pakistan is unable to procure this cheaper one due to rivalry with India on Kashmir issue. Currently only 60-70 thousand people are being inoculated on daily basis and with this pace it will take years to reach up to 10 million eligible population (above the age of 30 years) for COVID Vaccine. On the other hand Pakistan is also among the first and the only country in the world where COVID vaccine (Sputnik-V) is available in the local market and well off people are getting benefit without waiting for their turn for free vaccine being administered through government registration.



⁶ <https://casstt.com/post/pakistan-india-two-public-value-paths-in-the-coronavirus-pandemic/254>

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1615662>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1610392/pakistan-to-get-10m-doses-of-vaccine-under-covax>

B. Impact of COVID-19 on Democracy and Civic Space

B.1 Impact of COVID-19 on key Human Rights and SDGs

Ministry of Human Rights and UNDP Pakistan have done an analysis in November 2020 on COVID-19 and vulnerability in Pakistan and Findings of the report indicate that while Pakistan's overall COVID-19 has been cognizant of the general hardships experienced by people, there is a lot of room for improvement to ensure human rights protection at the grass-root level. The pandemic has highlighted preexisting and current shortcomings in the system, addressing which will not just contribute to a more holistic rebuilding and rehabilitation strategy for COVID-19 prevention, response and post pandemic recovery, but also develop resilience against other disasters and shocks that may threaten lives and livelihoods, amongst right holders and duty bearers. Furthermore, taking on an intersectional approach helped to identify most vulnerable groups susceptible to bearing disproportionate burden and brunt of complex emergencies including COVID-19 pandemic and their long-term impacts. For instance, while online remote learning during COVID-19 lockdowns has unveiled Pakistan's huge digital divide, further disadvantaging those students, teaching staff and learning systems – that either economically left behind or remain deprived of the digital coverage, it has also unearthed, the groups who amongst the disadvantaged are further excluded. In terms of remote access to education, young girls from poor households in remote areas where internet connectivity was lesser affordable for the households, or it suffered from low/ uncertain electricity supply and internet availability, were found to be the most neglected within the households and just as much as in the government's remote education strategy. Similarly, detainees and prisoners in overcrowded detention centres and displaced populations residing in over-populated spaces and shelters remained at far higher risk of contracting the virus despite the safety protocols of social distance⁹.

According to the UNDP's Human Development Index 2020 Pakistan is ranked 154th where 40% population lives below poverty line (@ USD1 per day), 22.80 million children are out of schools. Pakistan is among two countries of the world which are not polio free yet including Nigeria. Local government system is non-functional therefore the citizens' participation is very low and Pakistan is rated **Partly Free** in the recent Global Freedom House Report 2020¹⁰ whereas it is **INACTIVE** member of the Open Government Partnership¹¹ due to non-compliance. Pakistan is also placed in the **grey list** of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for the last thirteen years. Civic spaces are shrinking and CIVICUS Monitor¹² has ranked Pakistan in **REPRESSED** countries whereas Civil Society Index 2019¹³ ranked Pakistan in **EVOLVING** category. Freedom of expression and speech, right to information are constitutional rights under Article 19 and 19A respectively but laws and policies of state authorities related to these constitutional rights are derogatory.

⁹ https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/democratic_governance/covid-19-and-disaster-vulnerability-in-pakistan--a-human-rights-.html

¹⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2020>

¹¹ <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/pakistan/>

¹² <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/pakistan/>

¹³ <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-csosi-2018-report-asia.pdf>

The table ¹⁴ attached shows the five years situation related to human development, educational, employment, economic, democratic and civic rights. Since the adoption of SDGs various governments have frequently made tall claims towards the implementation of global and national commitments regarding listed indicators. If we analyze the situation considering the goal 16+ targets and

S. no	Indicators	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.	Human Development Index	145	147	150	152	154
2.	Poverty rate	24.3%	28.4%	31.3%	40%	40%
3.	Enrolment Rate	60%	64%	67%	82%	Couldn't find
4.	Gender parity index	143	112	148	152	151
5.	Employment Rate	5.8%	5.7%	5.50%	4.1%	4%
6.	Economic equality (Gini Coefficient / year)	32.1	37.60	36.20	No latest data found	No latest data found
7.	Democracy Rank	100	104	108	112	108/167
8.	Civic space Rank	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed	Repressed
9.	Transparency Rank	116	117	124	120	124/180
10.	Rank of Judiciary	NA	NA	98	117	120

indicators, we see there is 15.7% rise in poverty so efforts towards the achievement of poverty eradication (1.b) need to be enhanced. Although the enrolment rate has been increased from 60% in 2016 to 82% in 2019 yet more than 50% of the enrolled students leave schools before completing their primary level grades. There is a huge gap in the education facilities for both genders therefore the equal access for education for all (4.5), education facilities (4.a), quality education for peaceful global citizenship (4.7) is still a dream. Gender inequalities are continuously rising as the situation of gender equality (5.c) was better in 2016 & 2017 than in 2020 as the gender parity index rated Pakistan at 143 in 2016 and 151 in 2020 out of 153 countries. Employment rate has gone down from 508% in 2016 to 4% in 2020 and this may be due to the effects of COVID-19 on our economy. As per Gini Index¹⁵ the income inequality has also increased 4.1 points i.e. 32.1 in 2016 and 36.2 in 2018. Therefore the country's policies for greater equality (10.4) and opportunities for inclusive social and political participation (10.2) are failing and not fruitful.

Pakistan is placed under controlled and hybrid regimes in the global democracy index.. Pakistan was better in democratic governance (16.8) and inclusive and participatory decision making (16.7) in 2016 as it was ranked as 100 and it went down at 112 in 2019 and gone up a bit at 108 in 2020.

Civic spaces are extremely repressed since 2016 till date due to new derogatory regulatory policy environment towards civil societies, political participations and human rights voices. Unless better policy environment for effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all level (16.6) are not introduced civic spaces will remain limited in Pakistan. Illicit financial flows, organized crimes (16.4), corruption and bribery (16.5) have gone much beyond control as every year the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International reports us deteriorating figures and shares 8 points increase in

¹⁴ References of the figures in the table are attached as Annexure

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gini_coefficient

corruption and bribery i.e. 116 in 2016 and 124 in 2020. When it comes to rule of law & access to justice (16.3), the role of judiciary is pivotal however the lower upper judiciary is non performing and highly political. The recent report of World Law & Justice Project¹⁶ share the rule of law index and ranked Pakistan's judiciary at 120 that shows the dismalling status of rule of law and access to justice for all.

B.1.1 Civic Spaces

The civil society organizations in Pakistan are very much concerned about the policies of the subsequent governments where it has become impossible for NGOs to operate in an environment of mistrust and complicated procedures for getting approvals and signing of MoUs and obtaining NOCs with the several departments, divisions and commissions. Despite having registered with relevant government authorities and laws, new regulatory frameworks and sanctions have been imposed without any consultations with the NGO community. Such a situation has resulted in significant unemployment, reduction in development projects, and foreign remittances, which are badly affecting the already poor socio-economic conditions of our country.

In effect, all INGOs and NGOs receiving donations from abroad were required to re-register themselves with the interior ministry and the Economic Affairs Division of the finance ministry — a complicated, lengthy, expensive and inhospitable procedure. The process coincided with a smear campaign that cast doubts on the NGOs' loyalty to the country. NGO workers were harassed by repeated visits from the security apparatus. As a result, thousands of well-intentioned, functioning and delivering NGOs gradually closed operations, increasing unemployment and putting extra burden on the government particularly with regard to education and health.

The civil society organizations also do not like government illtreatment with them in the wake of FATF restrictions. Linking the clearance of NGOs with FATF is unjustified. In fact, the development sector is contributing to achieve the objectives of the FATF and government in curbing terrorist financing and money laundering through their projects such as good governance, safer charity practices etc. Importantly all donor money is channeled through proper banking system and the banks have their own check and balances where NGOs have to provide information about the purpose of funds received. Moreover donors have their own forms and requirements to be completed by implementing partners to make sure that the funds are allocated only for the purposes described in the proposals.

B.1.2 Right to Health and SDG 3 (Target 3.3., 3.8, 3.b, 3.c, 3.d, etc.)

According the recent report of MOHR and UNDP, Nevertheless, the onset of the virus in Pakistan compounded a number of challenges for the healthcare system of the country in terms of capacity, and also raised some human rights concerns that require immediate attention. The pandemic has highlighted some major limitations in Pakistan's extensive public health infrastructure including coordination challenges between the provinces and the federal government as health is a devolved subject under the 18th Amendment to the Constitution. The gaps highlighted by the current pandemic are both an eye-opening reminder of Pakistan's public health infrastructure's vulnerability to emergencies and disasters, which are only becoming more and more frequent world-wide, and an opportunity to develop and adopt a more long-term and resilient planning approach; one that addresses and safeguards the basic human rights of Pakistan's citizens. At the national level, Pakistan has about 1282 public hospitals, 5,743 dispensaries, and 133,707 hospital beds as of 2019. All these are not properly equipped with the life-saving equipment to deal with a pandemic and there are wide

¹⁶ https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-ROLI-2020-Online_0.pdf

geographical inequalities in accessing these facilities. Pakistan currently has 1,650 ventilators in government hospitals treating COVID-19 patients. Particularly worrisome is the fact that not all health units are adequately equipped and sometimes lack even basic hand hygiene facilities¹⁷.

Government's initiatives

The Government of Pakistan initiated a comprehensive health response to the pandemic through a number of capacity enhancement and coordination initiatives⁹. The National Command and Operation Center (NCOC)¹⁰ was set up for a unified response to the pandemic at the national scale, implementing the decisions of the National Coordination Committee¹¹ on COVID-19. While the centre coordinates the health response, the provinces took initiatives to increase their capacity to cope with the health calamity¹⁸.

A National Action Plan for COVID-19 was developed by March 7, 2020 as Pakistan's health response blueprint which advises the federal, provincial and district governments on reducing morbidity while reducing the cost on the economy. Additionally, in April Pakistan's Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 was developed to identify the funding requirement for dealing with the health crisis. A resource gap of USD 595 million was estimated to cater to the needs of dealing with the crisis between April to December 2020. In May 2020, UNDP developed Pakistan's Socioeconomic Framework for COVID-19 which was then submitted to the Planning Commission of Pakistan to incorporate the recommendations in the development response for COVID-19. Additionally, the Government invoked a number of new and existing laws to respond to COVID-19¹⁹.

A Resource Management System (RMS) was rolled out on 31 May 2020 and currently spans about 4000 COVID/ Non-COVID hospitals of the entire country. The system facilitates decision making in terms of establishment of correct needs assessment and capacity enhancement. The government also increased testing and screening capacity gradually using drive through testing services to avoid minimum crowding and use of military surveillance tools for tracking COVID patients. Its website www.covid.gov.pk is regularly updated with test statistics from around the country and contains resources for awareness and precautions.

B.1.3 Right to Education and SDG 4

Pakistan is an unfortunate country where 22.84 million children are already out of schools.²⁰ The COVID19 have further aggravated this learning crisis and pushed millions more not to return to schools/ education due to permanent closure of low income private schools, higher drop outs of existing boys and girls²¹.

Like other countries Pakistan also temporarily closed educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities) to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the education of millions of students in Pakistan. Parents and teachers have growing concerns about the likely impact on students' short-term learning and long-term success? The impact, no doubt, is negative and disproportionate. The closures are having more negative impact on students from low-income families or students of rural areas.

¹⁷ https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/democratic_governance/covid-19-and-disaster-vulnerability-in-pakistan-a-human-rights-.html

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/education>

²¹ <https://epod.cid.harvard.edu/article/analytical-angle-covid-19-and-looming-education-crisis>

On March 13, when the Government of Pakistan decided to close educational institutions, elite private educational institutions (both schools and universities), in urban centres, started online classes to minimize the disruption to their students' learning. For many of them, that was a small leap. Their students have educated parents, and laptops and desktops with Internet connections at home. This was not a substitute for the rich and meaningful learning experiences of classroom interaction. They communicate with teachers and do lessons/assignments using email, websites, and engaged in videoconferencing. Students have formed study groups using the same technologies and educational software and apps. But they're also losing social interaction, like sports and extracurricular activities which are as important as curriculum contents.

Keeping aside the loss in social interaction, poor internet connection, noise, lack of independent learning skills among kids and young children or emotional maturity to maintain attention, arguably these students of elite urban institutions have a learning advantage over those from disadvantaged ones who attend public educational institutions in general and those in the rural areas in particular. From March 13 to April 14, unlike elite institutions' students, public schools' students (74 percent in the rural areas and 41 percent in the urban) remained unattended. Their school closures were notified as 'summer vacation'. It was only on April 14, when the Federal Education Ministry, in tandem with PTV, started the first ever *tele school* in Pakistan to help public school students and minimize their learning loss. It is an appreciable initiative.

School closures, for low income families means children are expected to help their families. Children get engaged with their families doing agriculture, fetching wood and tending cattle. Some are even pushed into child labour. Similarly, the absence of an educational environment at home; children's and parents' lack of interest in schooling; household poverty; pressures of domestic responsibilities; and the absence of fathers due to outstation work are factors that will lead irreparable learning loss for these children²².

After six months of educational lockdown schools were reopened in three phases starting from September 15, 2020. All the schools will have to strictly follow the SOPs (standard operating procedures). It was announced by the federal and provincial governments that strict disciplinary action will be taken against violators,²³

And now, Pakistan's government has ordered educational institutions in 18 high-risk districts to remain closed from mid-march 2021 to April 30th for elementary school students and till April 18th for secondary school students, as the country continues to battle a third wave of coronavirus infections. But it is still likely to extend if COVID could not be controlled²⁴.

B.1.4 Right to Food and SDG 2

While there is no denying the fact that COVID-19 is primarily a health emergency, efforts required to control the virus have led to an economic and social crisis, which if not effectively addressed can lead to a human rights crisis.

With the onset of COVID-19, the monsoon floods and other emergencies, such as the desert locust attack, this progress may be compromised. Estimates reflect that economic slowdown and increased unemployment up to 10% may reverse the poverty rate back to approximately 40%, with a decline of 3% in real GDP growth. Employment of about 18.6 million people is speculated to be at-risk due to

²² <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/05/07/covid-19-education-unequal-learning-loss/>

²³ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistan-announces-reopening-schools-in-phases/1965561>

²⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/25/pakistan-extends-school-closures-amid-coronavirus-third-wave>

COVID-19 related impacts, alone. This trend is also supported by a Gallup survey showing that about 88% of the sample surveyed experienced a decline in their incomes, and 19% of the respondents reported being laid off from due to COVID-19. So far, no geographical or gender-based unemployment analysis has been conducted to understand the disparate impact of COVID on different sub-groups. Particularly vulnerable to such shocks are those women and men who are engaged in the informal sector working as daily wagers or piece rate workers, specifically those who are unregistered and are not protected by the formal social security mechanism in the country. These comprise about 75% of the 65 million labour force of Pakistan²⁵.

Government's initiatives for protecting the unemployed

Building on the existing commitment to poverty alleviation through its Ehsaas social protection Programme, the Government of Pakistan has taken remarkable initiatives to provide relief and protection to the vulnerable segments of the society. Within the purview of the PKR 1.2 trillion economic stimulus package, the government launched the largest social protection Programme, comprising emergency cash handouts, labour protection schemes, and employment retention and generation incentives. Under the Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme with a budget of PKR 203 billion, about 16.9 million people are targeted to receive one-off payment of PKR 12,000, covering a period for 4 months. Beneficiaries were identified using a rigorous mechanism including about 5 million of those who were already in the National Socioeconomic Registry (NSER), and additional 11.9 million people recently added to the vulnerability mapping. However, information received from representative of the Transgender Community reveals that no special package has been launched for the transgender community, rather they are eligible for the Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme under the general deserving category of poor people²⁶.

A **labour package** of PKR 200 billion was also initiated, specifically targeting daily wage labours and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to retain their labourers. Specifically, PKR 75 billion has been allocated to those unemployed because of COVID-19, among which about 6 million will receive a cash handout of PKR 12,000, PKR 50.69 billion have been dedicated to SMEs in the form of respite in electricity bills, and PKR 30 billion were allocated for risk-sharing and prevention of lay-offs in SMEs.

Between 17th March 2020 to 10th July 2020, 2,068 businesses have been supported with refinancing loans, covering about 1.2 million employees²⁷.

Other policy initiatives include the **Green Stimulus Programme**³⁰, that aims to create about 800,000 daily wage jobs for planting trees, and environmental protection and conservation, and the **Kamyab Jawan Programme** that is offering youth entrepreneurship loans at a reduced rate of 3%. A web-portal is also created for job-matching for returning unemployed overseas Pakistan. **Pakistan Bait ul Maal** has also developed an e-wallet scheme for facilitating payments²⁸

Most Affected Population Groups

Women and children from the disadvantaged households, homebased workers, domestic workers, daily wage earners (small shops, self-employed persons and families) and especially pregnant women, were among the most impacted during this pandemic.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/democratic_governance/covid-19-and-disaster-vulnerability-in-pakistan-a-human-rights-.html

Nearly half of households in the country rely on agriculture and livestock as their primary and/or secondary source of livelihood. Some 22% are dependent on daily wage labour (skilled/unskilled non-agricultural labor, forestry workers). Around 62% of households in the poorest wealth quintile rely on farm labor and daily wage as livelihood strategies (33% on farming - small/medium/large farming, livestock, fishing and agricultural labor) and 29% on wage labor (skilled and unskilled non-agricultural work).

B.1.5 Right to Work/Job and SDG 8

Impact of COVID-19 on Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

The biggest and most immediate impact of the lockdown was the halt in all type of business operations. Lockdown was first announced in Sindh province from March 23, 2020. Karachi—the capital city of Sindh province—is considered as the country's largest industrial zone accounted for 30% of total exports. Due to lockdown, out of 2700 factories in Karachi less than 50 were operating on the first working day.

After them, there is a class of micro-enterprises (also known as self-employed persons) such as small shop owners, household businesses, and street vendors, among others, who heavily rely on their micro business. These businesses are usually operated by family members in different industries ranging from agriculture to education. Further, these micro-enterprises are considered a part of the informal economy, and most of their activity is undocumented. Hence, the accurate number of these businesses is not known. According to the recently available statistics, the micro-enterprises or self-employed persons are accounted for 35.7% (2017–18) of the total national employment. Furthermore, 55.6% (2017–18) of these businesses are vulnerable, out of which, more than 87% of employment in agriculture, three-fourths of jobs in wholesale and retail trade, 50% of employment in restaurants, three-fifths of the job in real estate and business, and more than two-fifths of employment in transport and communication is vulnerable²⁹.

It has been reported that Pakistan has lost one-third of its revenue and exports dropped by 50% due to COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown. Economists warn of recession amid virus lockdowns in Pakistan. Similarly, the World Bank also warns that Pakistan might fall into a recession. Due to the ongoing crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan's real GDP growth in FY20 is expected to contract by 1.3% as national and global economic activity slowdowns abruptly during the last few months of the fiscal year. Further, in case the outbreak of COVID-19 deteriorates and continues longer than expected, Pakistan's real GDP growth for FY20 may contract by 2.2% before just recovering to 0.3% growth in FY21.

B.1.6 Freedom of Movement (e.g. Lockdown, shutdown, social distancing, etc.) (Target 16.10, etc.)

On 9 May, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government almost completely lifted a nationwide lockdown it had imposed in late March to counter COVID-19. Pakistan subsequently saw a surge in cases, placing it among the top twelve pandemic-affected countries worldwide. The government justifies the easing of nationwide restrictions on economic grounds; indeed, the lockdown's toll on the most vulnerable, workers and the poor has been brutal. Yet signs of economic recovery since it was lifted are few, while the virus threatens to overwhelm ill-equipped and under-funded health systems.

²⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590051X20300071>

The government's mixed messaging and misinformation from some religious leaders mean that many Pakistanis disregard public health advice. The removal of restrictions on communal prayers in mosques also increased the risks of new virus clusters. Many clerics advocate religious practices that undercut physical distancing and other preventive measures; they tell worshippers that piety alone, and not health practices, will determine their fate.

The government has imposed a lockdown in seven high-burdened cities of the provinces, restricting movement of the people to their homes, following intensity of the third wave of the Covid-19. The government stated that there shall be a complete ban on educational activities and on indoor and outdoor dining while only takeaway and home delivery shall be allowed. It stated that under the new decision, all commercial activities, establishments, and markets throughout the province shall be closed by 6pm on weekdays and shall remain completely closed on weekends, i.e. Saturdays and Sundays.

However, all medical services, pharmacies, medical stores, bakeries, general stores, milk/meat/chicken shops, tandoors, fruit, vegetables, courier services, driver hotels, patrol pumps, etc would remain exempt from these restrictions. Amusement parks throughout the province shall close by 6pm each day³⁰.

B.1.7 Inequality (SDG 10)

The government's policy vis-à-vis managing the corona pandemic has been quite prudent where it has consistently tried to balance safety with employment and personal income sustainability. However, the challenge may not be as simple as that, as pointed out by two recent reports published on how the pandemic is quietly or rather discreetly affecting inequality and potential poverty traps in developing countries, especially South Asia. These reports reveal a lot about the significantly additional burden that has been put on the social and public policy requirements due to this fast spreading virus; something that requires heavy funding to address and thereby poses to be an even more daunting challenge for countries with limited resources—the South Asian region with its high population base being the most obvious victim in this category. A challenge, which if not quickly addressed will not only risk reversing any gains achieved over the last decade in poverty alleviation, but will also predominantly end up distorting the inequality levels, in-turn disturbing the present delicately poised social equilibrium in such countries leading to possible unrest and economic catastrophes³¹.

The Oxfam reports talks about the deep digital divide that the pandemic has clearly exposed in the developing countries, something that perhaps has always been known, but rarely acknowledged or has rarely assumed such destructive proportions in the past. It goes without saying that interruptions in schooling reduce learning opportunities and to make matters worse, the poorest of the poor's marginal access to any type of other learning activity under the circumstances gets to be almost negligible, thereby simply compounding the problem of rising inequality. Inequality as we know has a direct and strong correlation with access to opportunity. Pakistan is named, as only about a quarter of the school children are accessing online education—the only educational platform available to them during the period the education institutions are closed. Additionally, less than 15 percent are able to take online classes despite a rather high density of smartphones per family and lastly, the most alarming, less than 1 percent of un-enrolled children under the age of 15, connect with any type of online learning activity. Naturally, the resulting colossal loss in developing human capital will carry long-term pain and

³⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1612336>

³¹ <https://nation.com.pk/11-Nov-2020/covid-19-and-inequality>

economic repercussions. Like almost in the entire South Asian region, in Pakistan also inequality has risen registering a double-digit growth per annum over the last three years³².

In its latest prognosis published on the World Economic Outlook—October 2020, the IMF makes a pertinent observation: Even before the pandemic struck, inequality, even in some emerging market economies had worsened, for example in South Asia and especially in India. So post COVID-19, it is more of a situation going from bad to worse, which is why the challenge today of public policy in countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan is much greater than ever before³³.

B.1.8 Gender Equality (SDG 5)

The uneven impact of COVID-19 has exposed entrenched gender and other inequalities in Pakistan. Initial research indicates that COVID-related death rates are higher among men. Nonetheless, in many ways, COVID-19 has had a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls. A recent UN report on the gender aspects of COVID-19 noted the pandemic’s “potentially strong adverse impacts on the livelihoods of vulnerable groups” and stated that it is likely to “further compound pre-existing gender inequalities” in developing countries like Pakistan³⁴.

In Pakistan, women have contributed significantly to combating the pandemic, working as frontline workers, doctors, nurses, paramedics and ‘lady health visitors’. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 80% employees in the health sector are women. The role that women perform as caregivers within households is also of immense importance. Yet a tendency to underrate and underutilize their knowledge and skills persists.

As a result of the lockdowns in Pakistan, restrictions on movement have made it difficult to access health care facilities, especially for women in remote areas. Anecdotal evidence indicates that women bear additional domestic burdens of caregiving and carrying out disease prevention measures. This increases their exposure to COVID-19. In many cases, women are expected to continue working even when they fall sick³⁵.

Even in pre-pandemic times, statistics show that 56% of the rural population does not have access to hand washing facilities with water and soap at home, which is essential for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Certain social practices increase vulnerability to COVID-19 among women. For example, due to a lack of latrines – as well as cultural stigma associated with women’s use of lavatories in the presence of male family members even when these facilities are available – many women are forced to defecate in fields, which makes them unable to properly dispose of faeces or wash their hands thoroughly after defecation. In addition, the use of firewood in stoves is a major cause of respiratory illness – which increases vulnerability to COVID-19 – especially among women and children, who spend most of their time at home and are thus constantly exposed to smoke³⁶.

Women in Pakistan are often expected to cook and serve food in their households. However, women disproportionately suffer from malnutrition and food shortages because of discriminatory norms in food allocation. Food insecurity among women in Pakistan is also a result of unequal access to resources such as land, credit, and technology as well as the fact that their work is often unpaid. Such difficulties are compounded in the mountain areas of Pakistan, where arable land is scarce and even

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ <https://www.icimod.org/article/covid-19-and-gender-inequality-in-pakistan/>

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

land that is available is underutilized due to outmigration of men. Our correspondences with mountain women reveal that the current lockdown has prevented them from selling their agri-products and procuring grain for themselves, potentially rendering them food insecure³⁷.

News reports note that there has been a surge in domestic violence, honor killings, and gender-based violence during the lockdown. As has been recorded worldwide, in Pakistan as well, enforced immobility and a decline in economic activity have led to an increase in depression, aggression and violent behaviour within households. The Government of Pakistan's Ministry of Human Rights has established a helpline to help victims of domestic violence. However, such facilities are not readily accessible to women from rural areas³⁸.

Schools in Pakistan have been closed for the past four months and been instructed to conduct lessons online. However, it is difficult for people in rural areas to access online classes, due to poor availability of internet and electricity. The situation is even more difficult for girls in Pakistan, since they are often not allowed to leave their homes to use facilities elsewhere. Reports also indicate that increased financial vulnerability has led parents to pull their daughters out of schools and arrange early marriages for them³⁹.

Many of our women contacts in rural Pakistan have mentioned that the lockdown has increased women's domestic burdens since their family members are now restricted to the house and family members living in the cities have also returned to their villages. They also note that men rarely share domestic duties. The responsibility of maintaining adequate facilities for handwashing and other preventive measures also falls disproportionately on women.

While the current lockdowns across Pakistan have had adverse impacts on all sections of society, those with low-paying jobs and in the informal sector have been particularly hit hard. In Pakistan, 70% of women work in the informal sector. Many of them have lost their jobs during the pandemic and many women in rural areas have lost significant income due to their inability to sell agri-products. As mentioned by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in its recent report, in Pakistan it is also the case that poor, single and widowed women face difficulties in gaining access to social safety programmes as many such programmes only regard men as the primary breadwinner of the family.

B.1.9 Other SDGs or human rights

Protection of Human Rights Defenders

In Pakistan, all human rights defenders face severe risks, but women human rights defenders even more so. They need security measures and plans and a network of allies who can help them in times of crisis. Little things can save a life.

Every year, thousands of human rights defenders brave dangers to help make Pakistan a better place. Many of them take risks that they believe are just part of the job, others get specific threats to their person but continue their work anyway, and sometimes, it costs them their lives. One in every two human rights defenders in Pakistan receives a threat. It is not dangerous for some of us; it is dangerous for all of us. The research showed that while all human rights defenders face severe challenges, women human rights defenders have an even more complex experience that is fraught with challenges.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

The biggest challenge beyond the nature of the risks faced by women human rights defenders was the lack of preventative measures taken or available to the participants. There is a need for security measures in light of the fact that the danger is real, as well as in light of the gendered experience of women human rights defenders within their own organizations.

When a defender receives a threat, they need allies. The media can be a friend in certain situations and very dangerous in others. By connecting women human rights defenders with journalists who understand their issues, we hope to make the media an asset rather than a liability. This is coupled with the need for lawyers who understand issues faced by defenders, the legal system and the particular mechanisms available for human rights defenders (such as the National Commission for Human Rights and the National Commission on the Status of Women). By creating this network, defenders have a specific set of actions and assets they can utilise in times of crisis⁴⁰.

Journalists and media workers have been targeted and killed by non-state actors. Families of journalists have recently been targeted in Balochistan. The government has not followed through on the Prime Minister's pledge to "establish an office of public prosecutor at the federal and provincial levels tasked with investigating attacks against journalists". The Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, curtails the exercise online of the rights to freedom of expression, and privacy by vesting Pakistan Telecommunications Authority with powers to retain data and shut down any website⁴¹.

B.2. Impact of COVID-19 on people, especially vulnerable groups, sectors and marginalized communities

B.2.1 Women

Past outbreaks and humanitarian crises have demonstrated that men and women are impacted differently. Women – especially women with disabilities and young women – and transgender persons suffer disproportionately due to the unequal gender and power relations that determine access to and control over resources.

In Pakistan, weak governance systems and a lack of enforcement of legal instruments undermine access to democratic rights. Though the extent and scope of the gender-differential impact of COVID-19 in Pakistan is not yet known, women and most marginalized communities will likely experience disproportionate hardship. This reality means all preparedness and response measures should incorporate a gender analysis⁴².

B.2.2 Transgender and LGBT

UNDP Pakistan conducted a rapid preliminary socio-economic assessment to gauge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transgender persons living in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi with following recommendations:

- Trans-persons in the twin-cities have been gravely, disproportionately affected by socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁴⁰ <https://www.kios.fi/en/2019/09/countering-risks-and-threats-to-women-human-rights-defenders/>

⁴¹ https://adsp.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/P-11_Pakistan_-_Widespread-human-rights-violations-continue_Amnesty-International-Submission-for-the-UN-Universal-Periodic-Review.pdf

⁴² <https://www.ifes.org/publications/covid-19s-impact-pakistani-women>

- Measures to address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic should consider the particular vulnerabilities of the trans-people, including older persons, those living with disabilities, compromised immune systems and the homeless, and ensure that trans-people are fully covered by relief to recovery packages and not rendered invisible or unheard at any stage.
- All development partners, including decision-makers, must speak out against stigmatization and discrimination directed at the trans-people in the context of the pandemic.
- Shelters, support services, and other measures to address gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic and must take urgent steps to include the trans-population.
- Most trans-community members are semi or poorly educated, therefore there are obvious and serious gaps in understanding written information and precautionary guidelines with regards to COVID-19. A community-based awareness mechanism should be introduced to educate them on COVID-19 prevention and response. This should be clubbed with the basic training on preparing cost-effective masks, disposing of masks and gloves, maintaining physical distance and keeping themselves safe in their personal spaces⁴³.

B.2.3 Person Living with Disabilities

B.2.3.1 Barriers in accessing information

Many persons with disabilities do not have access to information related to health recommendations. Information in braille, sign language, easy to read is unavailable and websites are inaccessible. Another issue to communication is language barriers, as there are no translated materials into local languages. Many are unable to understand English, meaning the information they can access is limited. Also, illiteracy levels are high in Pakistan among persons with disabilities, and many would require easy to read formats, info graphics and videos, amongst others.

B.2.3.2 Barriers in accessing social protection

Persons with disabilities do not have access to social protection and relief programs as their needs are not prioritized. Moreover, persons with disabilities with limited resources often require access to food, cash, hygiene kits and assistance provided by the government. However, they are unable to register themselves in online portals because they are not accessible and user friendly, especially for screen reader users. Also, many do not have internet connection. “How can they register? Portal missions are not in easy to read formats either”. DPOs offer their assistance in this matter and sometimes there are successful. “When a person with disability obtains cash or income support, they are unable to receive it because many do not have a bank accounts”⁴⁴.

B.2.4 Afghan Refugees in times of COVID-19

Karachi is home to more than 300,000 Afghan refugees, most of whom work as laborers or own small shops mainly in Pashtun-dominated areas. But a crippling lockdown that the government imposed late last month in a bid to stem the spread of the coronavirus, known as COVID-19, has left tens of thousands of refugees jobless.

There are around 2.8 million documented and undocumented Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, making it the largest refugee population in the world after the Syrians in Turkey. Only around half of the refugees are registered, with the rest to live without documents, mostly in northeastern Khyber

⁴³ <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/stories/social-inclusion-of-vulnerable-transgenders-in-times-of-covid-19.html>

⁴⁴ <https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/covid19-pakistan>

Pakhtunkhwa and southwestern Balochistan provinces which border war-infested Afghanistan. Southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital, also hosts 500,000 Afghan refugees⁴⁵.

B.2.5 Older Persons in times of COVID-19

COVID-19 is an unprecedented health crisis and older people are disproportionately affected. The pandemic is spreading among people of all ages, but older people and those with chronic diseases and disabilities are at a higher risk of illness, disability and death from COVID-19. Governments and international relief agencies must recognize that older people have equal rights to health and humanitarian assistance⁴⁶.

Recommendations for Action

- Awareness raising among communities especially older people, persons with disabilities and their family members about preventive measures using accessible modes (audio and visuals) and regional languages.
- Develop specific prevention and care guidelines for older people living in care facilities and with families. Support and engage older people in activities which help overcome their isolation and help improve their mental health.
- Psychosocial support to older people and persons with disability, both living with their families and in care homes.
- Provision of protective supplies to older people in their own homes and in care homes.
- Provision of financial support to the poor older people with chronic diseases, or who are informal employment.
- Provision of equipment to the care homes for development of isolation corners in their care homes to prevent spread of infections and COVID 19.
- Training of care providers of the care Home/Shelters on protective and preventive measures and provide them personal protection equipment⁴⁷

B.3 Impact of COVID-19 on Democracy and Civic Space

B.3.1 Access to information



Article 19A of the Constituion of Pakistan gaurantees that every citizen shall have the right to have access to

⁴⁵ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/covid-19-afghan-refugees-in-pakistan-seek-world-s-help/1790585>

⁴⁶ <https://www.helpage.org/silo/files/covid19-rapid-needs-assessment--asia-pacific--region.pdf>

⁴⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Needs%20Assessment%20for%20OP%20-%20COVID19.pdf>

information in all matters of public importance subject to regulations and reasonable restrictions imposed by law⁴⁸.

The Right to Information Commissions are established at national and provincial level however most of them are non functional and hardly serve the purpose of their establishment. Most of the people do not know that RTI prevails in their province or respective community or department however those who know hardly get back appropriate or timely response if they ever applied for information. Many government and judicial establishments are not bound to provide any information if sought under RTI. According to SDGs Citizens' Scorecard only 10.7% applicants are satisfied by the responses of RTI commissions⁴⁹. The current government has moved Right of Access to Information (amendment) Act 2020 in the Senate of Pakistan to exclude Parliament from the definition of public body. The Coalition of Right to Information (CRTI) strongly condemned this move and declared this move malafide, unconstitutional and against the interest of people of Pakistan⁵⁰. According to the Freedom on the NET 2020, the information in Pakistan is still very restricted and limited as shared in attached picture⁵¹.

B.3.2 Freedom of Speech and Expression

Pakistan is rated **PARTLY FREE** in the latest Freedom House Report 2020⁵² whereas Article 19 of the Constitution of Pakistan⁵³ guarantees freedom of speech and expression to every citizen subject to any reasonable restriction imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam, or the integrity, security or defence of Pakistan or any part thereof, friendly relationships with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court or incitement of an offence. The lacunas in the Article 19 regarding the definition of what is pro and what is against the glory of Islam, integrity, security or defence of Pakistan, public order, morality, decency, contempt of court etc. are often been exploited by the state and conservatives/ religious orthodox to suppress the freedom of speech and expression of civil society and citizens' at large. More often the religious minorities, journalist community and human rights activists are being exploited and persecuted under such lacunas through allegations related to blasphemies and national interest etc⁵⁴.

In order to control cyber crimes government introduced various laws including Electronic Transaction Ordinance 2002⁵⁵ and the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA) 2016⁵⁶ however they are being used for shutting down the voices of dissent and curbing freedom of speech and expression. Under section 37 of PECA law a government officer from federal investigation agency is empowered to determine what comes against glory of Islam, national security, morality and public order. Unavailability of any kind of Protection of Data Act in the presence of PECA law is another challenge making the lives of journalists community and human rights actors more vulnerable. Print & electronic media as well as social media users are also facing all time threats of persecution. YouTube remained closed for three years since the year 2013 and ban was lifted in January 2016⁵⁷. Pakistan also imposed ban on TikTok on October 9, 2020⁵⁸ considering indecent and immoral content under section 37 of the PECA law. Almost 33 journalists lost their lives in past six years⁵⁹ whereas in general media is facing

⁴⁸ <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part2.ch1.html>

⁴⁹ <http://www.sdgscitizenscorecard.pda.net.pk/>

⁵⁰ <https://islamabadpost.com.pk/crti-opposes-efforts-to-weaken-federal-right-of-access-to-information-act-2017/>

⁵¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-net/2020>

⁵² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2020>

⁵³ <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part2.ch1.html>

⁵⁴ <https://think-asia.org/bitstream/handle/11540/6749/Freedom-of-Expression-in-Pakistan-a-myth-or-a-reality-W-159.pdf?sequence=1>

⁵⁵ <http://www.pakistanlaw.com/eto.pdf>

⁵⁶ http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1470910659_707.pdf

⁵⁷ <https://www.cnbc.com/2016/01/18/pakistan-lifts-youtube-ban-after-three-years.html>

⁵⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/9/pakistan-bans-tiktok-over-indecent-content>

⁵⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1514131>

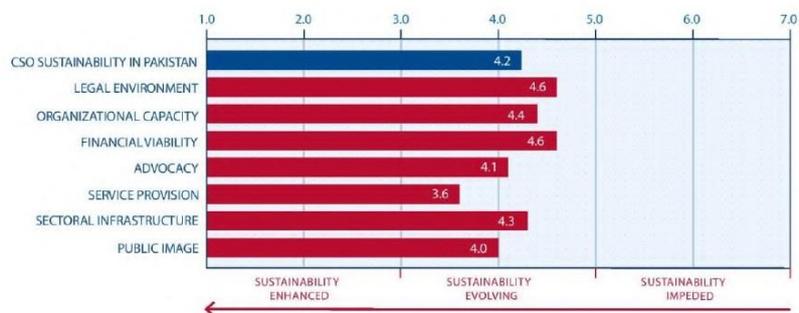
extreme fear and self censorship⁶⁰. According to the SDGs Citizens’ Scorecard⁶¹ more than 67% people were not able to express their feelings and thoughts freely.

On April 8th, 2021, the NA Standing Committee on Interior approved the bill to make amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 to take action against those who intentionally ridicule armed forces. The amendment, which will be called Section 500-A, states: “Punishment for intentional ridiculing of the Armed Forces etc. Whosoever intentionally ridicules, brings into disrepute or defames the Armed Forces of Pakistan or a member thereof, he shall be guilty of an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or fine which may extend to five hundred thousand rupees, or with both⁶².” Though many of Ministers and Member National Assemblies are contradicting and not happy with passed bill.

B.3.3 Civil Society and Civic Spaces

The overall civic space in Pakistan falls under **REPRESSED** category according to latest CIVICUS Monitor 63 . Pakistan had shut down 18 INGOs in December 2018 and asked the international staff to leave the country immediately 64 . 2018

OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.2



Asia Civil Society Index⁶⁵ released by USAID and FHI 360 (in November 2019 ranked civil society in Pakistan in **EVOLVING** category with score of 4.2. The graph shows that CSOs in Pakistan face severe sustainability challenges including challenges related to legal environment, financial viability and public image etc. This also shows that the organizations involved in the service provision are more comfortable over the advocacy centered CSOs.

Therefore, the civil society organizations in Pakistan are very much concerned about the policies of the subsequent governments where it has become impossible for NGOs to operate in an environment of mistrust and complicated procedures for getting approvals and signing of MoUs and obtaining NOCs with the several departments, divisions and commissions. Despite having registered with relevant government authorities and laws, new regulatory frameworks and sanctions have been imposed without any consultations with the NGO community. Such a situation has resulted in significant unemployment, reduction in development projects, and foreign remittances, which are badly affecting the already poor socio-economic conditions of our country.

In effect, all INGOs and NGOs receiving donations from abroad were required to re-register themselves with the interior ministry and the Economic Affairs Division of the finance ministry — a complicated, lengthy, expensive and inhospitable procedure. The process coincided with a smear

⁶⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/05/extreme-fear-and-self-censorship-media-in-pakistan-under-attack>

⁶¹ <http://www.sdgscorecard.pda.net.pk/>

⁶² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1617106>

⁶³ <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/pakistan/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/media-releases/3670-pakistan-shuts-down-and-kicks-out-18-international-ngos-with-20-others-facing-expulsion-2>

⁶⁵ <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-csosi-2018-report-asia.pdf>

campaign that cast doubts on the NGOs' loyalty to the country. NGO workers were harassed by repeated visits from the security apparatus. As a result, thousands of well-intentioned, functioning and delivering NGOs gradually closed operations, increasing unemployment and putting extra burden on the government particularly with regard to education and health.

The civil society organizations also do not like government illtreatment with them in the wake of FATF restrictions. Linking the clearance of NGOs with FATF is unjustified. In fact, the development sector is contributing to achieve the objectives of the FATF and government in curbing terrorist financing and money laundering through their projects such as good governance, safer charity practices etc. Importantly all donor money is channeled through proper banking system and the banks have their own check and balances where NGOs have to provide information about the purpose of funds received. Moreover donors have their own forms and requirements to be completed by implementing partners to make sure that the funds are allocated only for the purposes described in the proposals.

B 3.4 Protection for Civil Society

The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) proposed draft legislation on unified registration and regularization of NGOs/NPOs as part of compliance with Financial Action Task Force (FATF) requirements. However, the legislation has not been presented before cabinet, the first step towards parliamentary assent to any draft law. FATF compliance has also led to enhanced scrutiny of NGOs. The provincial governments have deregistered thousands of NGOs for being dormant or not complying with financial requirement such as submission of audit reports to the governments. Punjab canceled the registration of over 9,000 NGOs registered in the province, Sindh over 7,000, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa around 4,000. These organizations were primarily deregistered for not sharing their financial records, including their sources of funding, audit reports, and activities with authorities as required under the relevant laws. In addition, the Federal Board of Revenue, in collaboration with Pakistan Center for Philanthropy, has also increased its oversight of the NPOs/INPOs for possible involvement in money laundering or terror financing. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has also recently been investigating the sources and use of NGOs funds. Earlier this year, NAB forwarded the inquiries against NGOs, including SDPI and Fafen, for further legal proceedings to the Ministry of Interior. It also sent its inquiry against officials of the Fata Rural Programme Project to the relevant department for action.

Federal and provincial governments have also been activating existing and new institutional mechanisms to regulate the work of NPOs, civil society groups, and charities. Last year, the federal government reconstituted the Trust for Voluntary Organization (TVO), created as an indigenous grant-making organization in 1990, TVO aims to tap the potential of NGOs to aid their development process and develop a mechanism for strengthening their contribution to improving the quality of life of neglected segments of Pakistani population. The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also setting up a commission to regulate the functioning of charities in the province and ensure the effective use of charitable funds under the KP Charities Act, 2019.

In the backdrop of increased government scrutiny, NGOs are demanding a mechanism to facilitate the required registration and liaising with the government. For instance, in February, a group of CSOs recommended the government to devolve the NGO registration and the No Objection Certificate issuance process to the district level.

Finally, the number of Pakistani NGOs granted Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) by the federal government's Economic Affairs Division (EAD), which is required to implement a project with

foreign funding, has gone up to 64, with 89 more in process. The rejection of an NGO's request for an MOU with EAD does not restrict it from obtaining domestic funding.

B.3.5 Legislation on NGOs in Pakistan

The not-for-profit sector in Pakistan has grown considerably in recent years in terms of both its size and its scope of work. Although recent government regulations have resulted in many civil society organizations (CSOs) becoming dormant, today Pakistan's approximately 45,000 organizations employ still around 300,000 people, use around 200,000 full time staff, and engage in a wide set of activities ranging from service delivery to sophisticated financial services to technical advice in areas like agricultural extension, water and sanitation, and housing construction. Increasingly, CSOs are engaged in lobbying for legal and fiscal reform and take a proactive approach in defining issues for the national agenda. This new role is partly derived from the comparatively large volume of resources the civil society sector now commands.

A large proportion (38%) of organizations are not registered under any law. Even those that are registered are not necessarily subject to monitoring and evaluation under the regulatory system. To address this issue, since 2003 a CSO certification regime for tax exemption and systems evaluation has been instituted. While the government has introduced many administrative measures, it has yet to introduce comprehensive legislation to improve the regulatory framework for CSOs.

There is a discernible trend in Pakistan in which the State is moving away from being the monopoly provider of social services, and is creating an enabling environment for a variety of non-state actors to deliver a wide range of social services. This is truly a paradigm change and has profound implications for the regulatory role of the state and the nonprofit sector.

Generally, the legal framework for CSOs may be divided into several categories. Some laws govern the registration, internal governance, and accountability of organizations. Other laws govern how they are financed and managed. Still other laws govern the reporting relationship between the state and CSOs with respect to their operations or the manner in which they treat their employees. Taken as a whole, the legal framework can be considered generally enabling for civil society and the activities of CSOs.

B. 3.6 Protection of Human Rights Defenders

In Pakistan, all human rights defenders face severe risks, but women human rights defenders even more so. They need security measures and plans and a network of allies who can help them in times of crisis. Little things can save a life.

Every year, thousands of human rights defenders brave dangers to help make Pakistan a better place. Many of them take risks that they believe are just part of the job, others get specific threats to their person but continue their work anyway, and sometimes, it costs them their lives. One in every two human rights defenders in Pakistan receives a threat. It is not dangerous for some of us; it is dangerous for all of us. The research showed that while all human rights defenders face severe challenges, women human rights defenders have an even more complex experience that is fraught with challenges.

The biggest challenge beyond the nature of the risks faced by women human rights defenders was the lack of preventative measures taken or available to the participants. There is a need for security measures in light of the fact that the danger is real, as well as in light of the gendered experience of women human rights defenders within their own organizations.

When a defender receives a threat, they need allies. The media can be a friend in certain situations and very dangerous in others. By connecting women human rights defenders with journalists who understand their issues, we hope to make the media an asset rather than a liability.

This is coupled with the need for lawyers who understand issues faced by defenders, the legal system and the particular mechanisms available for human rights defenders (such as the National Commission for Human Rights and the National Commission on the Status of Women). By creating this network, defenders have a specific set of actions and assets they can utilise in times of crisis⁶⁶.

Journalists and media workers have been targeted and killed by non-state actors. Families of journalists have recently been targeted in Balochistan. The government has not followed through on the Prime Minister’s pledge to “establish an office of public prosecutor at the federal and provincial levels tasked with investigating attacks against journalists”. The Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, curtails the exercise online of the rights to freedom of expression, and privacy by vesting Pakistan Telecommunications Authority with powers to retain data and shut down any website⁶⁷.

B.3.7 Freedom of Assembly

Pakistan

PARTLY FREE

38/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	16 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	22/ 60

Pakistan holds regular elections under a competitive multiparty political system. However, the military exerts enormous influence over security and other policy issues, intimidates the media, and enjoys impunity for indiscriminate or extralegal use of force. The authorities impose selective restrictions on civil liberties, and Islamist militants carry out attacks on religious minorities and other perceived opponents—though the rate of terrorist attacks has decreased markedly over the last decade⁶⁸.

Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom have not provided effective safeguards against discriminatory legislation, social prejudice, and sectarian violence. Hindus have complained of vulnerability to kidnapping and forced conversions, and some continue to migrate to India. Members of the Christian and other religious minorities remain at risk of blasphemy accusations that can arise from trivial disputes and escalate to criminal prosecution and mob violence. The blasphemy laws and their exploitation by religious vigilantes have also curtailed freedom of assembly and expression by Muslims⁶⁹.

The constitution guarantees the right to assemble peacefully, though the government can harness legal provisions to arbitrarily ban gatherings or any activity designated a threat to public order. During 2019,

⁶⁶ <https://www.kios.fi/en/2019/09/countering-risks-and-threats-to-women-human-rights-defenders/>

⁶⁷ https://adsp.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/P-11_Pakistan_-_Widespread-human-rights-violations-continue_Amnesty-International-Submission-for-the-UN-Universal-Periodic-Review.pdf

⁶⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2020>

⁶⁹ Ibid

the authorities restricted assembly by some groups considered antistate, though it proved relatively tolerant of other demonstrations, including those by the political opposition and religious right⁷⁰.

The rights of workers to organize and form trade unions are recognized in law, and the constitution grants unions the rights to collective bargaining and to strike. However, these protections are not strongly enforced. Roughly 70 percent of the workforce is employed in the informal sector, where unionization and legal protections are minimal. The procedures that need to be followed for a strike to be legal are onerous. Strikes and labor protests are organized regularly, though they often lead to clashes with police and dismissals by employers⁷¹.

The current government has continued a crackdown on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), both domestic and foreign that was initiated by its predecessor in 2015. Organizations are subject to intrusive registration requirements and vetting by military intelligence. Officials can demand that NGOs obtain a “no-objection certificate” (NOC) before undertaking even the most innocuous activity.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

C. Response to COVID-19 including recovery, mitigation and preparedness

C.1 Major policies and programs carried out by the government

C1.1 State Institutions and Democracy

Pakistan is a federal republic comprised of four provinces Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh as well as two semi-autonomous regions namely Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. Pakistan is governed through a constitution and follow the parliamentary form of governance partially adopting the Westminster and American democratic models. Since the sovereignty lies with almighty ALLAH therefore the name of the country was changed from Dominion of Pakistan⁷² to Islamic Republic of Pakistan (land of pure) in 1956 nearly 9 years later than August 14, 1947, the day of independence from British monarchy. The country's name was again changed as Republic of Pakistan in 1962 by a military government however the same government was compelled to return to Islamic Republic of Pakistan just in 1963. Ultimately the sovereignty of ALLAH bestowed to the people of Pakistan is transferred to the Parliament through elected representatives at Majlis-e-Shoora (national assembly/ lower house) and the Senate of Pakistan (upper house). Prime Minister is the Head of Government and President is the Head of State. Majority party in Parliament elects the Prime Minister whereas Prime Minister acts as the Chief Executive of the country that runs its affairs through Cabinet which is the highest executive body of the country. A non-Muslim cannot be elected at the position of President and or Prime Minister.

C.1.2 Federation of Pakistan

All the four federating units are known as provinces and have their provincial Parliaments whereas the semi-autonomous regions also have their elected legislative assemblies. After 18th constitutional amendment in 2010⁷³ provinces have more executive and financial powers than the federal government concerning socio-economic uplift and political empowerment of the people as 27 federal ministries and divisions were devolved to provinces. Provinces have authority for more robust legislation except the matters related to defense, communication, railways, foreign affairs and internal security.

C.1.3 Judicial System

Supreme Court of Pakistan is the apex constitutional court of the country followed by provincial high courts and district courts. Special courts like accountability courts and anti-terrorism courts⁷⁴ are also functional side by side the constitutional judicial system. Military Courts⁷⁵ remained active until the mid-March of 2019 but not given further extension due to the resistance from formal judiciary and civil society. Most of the cases related to forced disappearance of people were being tried at military courts therefore the higher courts were handicapped in dealing with such petitions of the citizens.

C.1.4 Local Governance

Local governments are often non-functional during the democratic regimes whereas remained functional and active during the dictatorial regimes. This is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan

⁷² https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion_of_Pakistan

⁷³ <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/amendments/18amendment.html>

⁷⁴ <http://www.molaw.gov.pk/molaw/userfiles1/file/Anti-Terrorism%20Act.pdf>

⁷⁵ <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/watchdog-pakistans-military-courts-disaster-human-rights>

remained under dictatorships for more than 36 years out of 73 years of its existence. Currently hybrid democracy is being practiced in the country yet the local governments are non-functional across the country. After the 18th constitutional amendment provinces are responsible for the affairs of local governments including allocation of financial resources at district level however none of the province has ever tried to announce the provincial finance commission for appropriate resource allocations to local governments or district governments. Devolution of power at the local level is stagnant after 2007 in the country.

C.1.5 Current Regime (2018-2023)

The current government led by Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (Pakistan Justice Movement) came in to power in the country after general elections in July 2018 following the slogan of corruption free society however all national and international surveys including Transparency International's Corruption Index⁷⁶ and Citizens' Scorecard⁷⁷ on SDGs 16.5 & 16.6 have revealed that instances of corruption in every sphere of life have gone up. There are more than 10 agencies functional in the country including Anti-Corruption Department, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and National Accountability Bureau (NAB) against corruption however most of them are indulged in political victimization of opposition leaders and workers.

Election body/ process

A prime minister responsible to the bicameral parliament holds most executive power under the constitution. The president, who plays a more symbolic role, is elected for up to two five-year terms by an electoral college comprising the two chambers of parliament and the provincial assemblies. PTI-nominated candidate Arif Alvi was elected president in September 2018 by the Electoral College, which had been newly constituted after the general elections in July 2018.

Elections are administered by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), whose members are current or retired senior judges nominated through a consultative process that includes the government and the parliamentary opposition. The electoral laws are largely fair, and candidates have extensive access to the courts in electoral disputes.

Election observer missions in 2018 acknowledged that the formal electoral framework and its implementation complied with international standards. However, the ECP proved unable to counteract efforts by elements of the judicial and military establishment and their allies to manipulate the campaign environment. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, politically orchestrated judicial activism resulted in the disqualification of candidates, while the "censorship, intimidation, harassment, and abduction" of journalists who were critical of the security establishment or favored the PML-N or PPP ensured uneven access to the media.

Other, ongoing problems include lower rates of voter registration among women, a requirement that members of the Ahmadi religious minority register as non-Muslims despite considering themselves Muslims, and vague moral requirements for candidate nomination⁷⁸.

C.1.6 Anti-Corruption Agency

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) was established on November 16, 1999 by the National Accountability Ordinance. The NAB is a federal executive agency of the Government of Pakistan,

⁷⁶ <https://tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/corruption-rank>

⁷⁷ <http://sdgscitizenscorecard.pda.net.pk/>

⁷⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-world/2020>

with the mandate to deal with corruption prevention, raise public awareness, and enforce of anti-corruption measures. The NAB has its headquarters in the federal capital and has five regional offices in four provinces. The headquarters office exclusively performs policy and monitoring functions, while the hardcore work of investigation is carried out in the regional offices. The NAB's main tasks have been organized along functional lines and are undertaken by four main divisions: Operations, Prosecution, Awareness and Prevention, and Human Resource and Finance Divisions⁷⁹.

C.1.7 Corruption Trends

Pakistan has consistently performed poorly on international indicators measuring corruption, and this is still the case despite recent the government commitment to deal with the issue. Corruption is perceived to be widespread and a serious issue for the country. Pakistan has featured in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index since 1995, and has consistently ranked among the countries perceived to be most corrupt. In the 2014 edition, Pakistan scored 29 out of 100 (from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)), up one point from 28 in 2013⁸⁰.

Pakistan has slipped by four points on the international Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and stands at 124th position in comparison to 120th position in 2019. Pakistan lost four positions in 2020 compared to 2019 and seven positions compared to 2018. In 2019, Pakistan ranked 120th on the global corruption list and 117 in 2018. The TI Pakistan Chairman Sohail Muzaffar said Pakistan has scored less than last year on two counts: the rule of law index and varieties of democracy. The questions asked by the rule of law index and varieties of democracy, he said, are about the corruption of government officials through legislatures (parliament), executives (bureaucracy), judiciary, police and military. Muzaffar said that the government has to improve its performance in these four sectors⁸¹.

C.1.8 National Human Rights Institutions

C.1.8.1 Situation of NHRI's

The crackdown on the media, civil society and the political opposition intensified. Frequent enforced disappearances continued; nobody was held accountable. COVID-19 created new challenges for economic, social and cultural rights. Health workers were detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, and also came under attack at their place of work. The Supreme Court blocked efforts to relieve prison overcrowding, despite the spread of COVID-19 in prisons. Religious minorities continued to be prosecuted under blasphemy laws and attacked by non-state actors. Violence against women remained prevalent. Prime Minister Khan made encouraging announcements to release women prisoners and criminalize torture but there was little progress in implementing these measures. The Ministry of Human Rights presided over critical reforms around the death penalty and child abuse. The National Commission on Human Rights remained defunct⁸².

C.1.8.2 Civic Spaces in Pakistan before and in times of COVID-19

It is commendable that NGOs in Pakistan stepped in to help the needy during the lockdown even before the provincial and federal governments. NGOs played an effective role in the social response to the earthquake and flood emergencies in 2005 and 2010 respectively.

However, NGOs suffered serious setbacks in their outreach and capacity since the introduction of the so-called INGO policy in October 2015 — 'so-called' because it defied its stated purpose of regulating

⁷⁹ <https://www.acauthorities.org/country/pk>

⁸⁰ <https://www.u4.no/publications/pakistan-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-efforts>

⁸¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/781395-corruption-gone-up-in-pakistan-ti>

⁸² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/pakistan/report-pakistan/>

the social sector; rather, it restricted the latter's resources. Moreover, the policy lacked a proper legal basis and approval of policymaking forums e.g. the Council of Common Interests, the cabinet and parliament.

The interior ministry introduced this policy disregarding other policy interests, such as a free and diversified economy, foreign relations, infrastructure development and social services. The policy became a tool with which to repress INGOs and NGOs including local trusts, educational institutions, charities, church-based, development and human rights advocacy groups. No wonder the courts restrained the government each time an NGO approached the judiciary in 2017 and 2019 seeking remedy, though only a few NGOs could seek it.

In effect, all INGOs and NGOs receiving donations from abroad were required to re-register themselves with the interior ministry and the Economic Affairs Division of the finance ministry — a complicated, lengthy, expensive and inhospitable procedure. The process coincided with a smear campaign that cast doubts on the NGOs' loyalty to the country. NGO workers were harassed by repeated visits from the security apparatus. As a result, thousands of well-intentioned, functioning and delivering NGOs gradually closed operations, increasing unemployment and putting extra burden on the government particularly with regard to education and health.

Ironically, since the imposition of this policy, Pakistan's public debt increased from Rs18.14 trillion in 2015 to Rs33.4tr in 2020. The debt burden increased by Rs6tr from February 2019 to February 2020. Foreign assistance declined drastically. For instance, the government received grant assistance of \$447.7 million in 2013-2014 from bilateral and multilateral donors which fell to \$160m in 2018-2019. International aid is often linked to civil liberties and transparency in a free economy.

In a welcome move, the interior ministry has relaxed the rules for select INGOs willing to engage in relief work after the coronavirus emergency for six months. In contrast, Punjab's Provincial Disaster Management Authority requires that ration distribution by the NGOs be under its control. The two actions are inconsistent with one another.

Considering that the current emergency is likely to persist for some time, the relaxation must be extended to a wide range of INGOs and local NGOs. Moreover NGOs should be facilitated so that they can manage a balance between their accountability and response to the enormous need⁸³.

C.1.8.3 The role of NHRIs and Human Rights in Pakistan

A number of government bodies have already been created concerning human rights protection and promotion in Pakistan.⁶¹ In order to ensure transparency and enable coordination in the promotion of human rights, the NCHR could lead in the adoption of a national human rights policy framework, which outlines the different roles of each institution, as well as the modes of cooperation. These may include establishment of policy priorities, sharing of knowledge and statistical information, research studies, training programmes and regular consultations and monitoring⁸⁴.

⁸³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1552828>

⁸⁴ https://democracy-reporting.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/dri-pk-bp_54_pakistan_s_national_commission_for_human_rights_04-2015.pdf?_cf_chl_jschl_tk_=1e7dd372a91c2df5afal1adf7da318ff03e4d3b4-1618388836-0-AV2TIVSMVD7Nm-A7mNT1LBUY5iO_eF_mciSyPbFgq88t-NhsFXk0s4iC-cPr-Po_2wFlrwAJn8KVizosPoP9_1PLs8Je5Z7FsVycBzI2v_RRh2wc3BnJo05Ziu5HqMZ4iAgB6VIaMOwBxVd8ZXknuMCuREbi3YmGW0IH-fu9FMXzgujE84x_Vt93bk-dzfwUvCDzx_rE_nEmcX_Sa_uBNnSrE4TfY_gaJ47cNxNTmCSSLuE6oE9wxE2Qjv6IzPRgt50x98bD0i2oDhUPCq3moB3rhRxyqbqkPFgHZzESuHv1SFLwc7saaNOE4w2rt4suDs2z9D6NetqpyQ_mF5IR9HL194RqJqAmswY3AQGGUZd5XWGE5Qk3X3VOnSovI7Y0ZKmUM9LOFP0FA4YkkUT2ipQSP2uybgkcJDICm2cyf7CJEmOeFKQ4hbgNam0Chvjw0wGdVSpWmAc6xjPxOurnriQ4sP4kuYsw1BWFZE9mCf284SqkhIaf9XCz7G1N5xA

C.1.9 Gender Equality Commissions

Pakistan is the world's fifth most populous country and the second largest South Asian country.

The sixth Population and Housing Census held in 2017 reveals Pakistan's population has increased by 57 per cent, from 132.3 million in 1998 to 207.7 million. The Census also shows that men have outnumbered women, where men are 51 per cent of the total population and women are 49 per cent⁸⁵.

Pakistan has adopted a number of key international commitments to gender equality and women's human rights – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Sustainable Development Goals⁸⁶.

National commitments in place include a National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women, Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences in the name or pretext of Honour) Act, Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences Relating to Rape) and a National Plan of Action on Human Rights. Local commitments adopted include Gender Equality Policy Frameworks and Women's Empowerment Packages and Initiatives⁸⁷.

Despite these commitments, Pakistan's ranking for gender equality remains one of the lowest in the world. Women from marginalized social classes face multiple challenges and are often only able to work from home. These women engaged in the informal sector of the economy are called Home-Based Workers (HBWs). Of the estimated 20 million HBWs in Pakistan, 12 million are women. According to UN Women's Status Report, 2016 on Women's Economic Participation and Empowerment in Pakistan, women account for 65 per cent of the PKR 400 billion (USD 2.8 billion) that HBWs contribute to Pakistan's economy⁸⁸.

C.1.10 The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW)

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) came into existence through a presidential ordinance and was established by the NCSW Act, 2012 as a financially and an administratively autonomous statutory body. It is an outcome of the national and international commitments of the Government of Pakistan like the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, 1995; and the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Women, 1998. The basic role of NCSW is to examine and review laws, policies, programmes and monitor the implementation of laws for the protection and empowerment of women, and to facilitate the government in the implementation of international instruments and obligations. As NCSW, now every province has provincial commissions as well according to the provincial legislation.

The core work of NCSW is central to the principles of gender equality and empowerment as enshrined in the Constitution. It not only grants equality to women but also empowers the States to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of girls and women. NCSW also undertakes and encourages research and data generations as evidence for policies, action and monitoring as a central component of its work. Based on data from different sources, it showcases various indicators like women's household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, political

⁸⁵ <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/pakistan>

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

participation, acceptance of unequal gender roles, exposure to media, access to education, experience of domestic violence etc.⁸⁹

C.1.11 Information and Communications

Information and Communication and Technology (ICT) commonly refers to the newer technologies of computers, internet and phones and also believed to incorporate media such as radio, television and libraries, due to their role in the transmission of information. The Information Society represents an era where productivity and competitiveness for firms, regions and countries depend more than ever on information. Its creation, processing and dissemination are the most significant economic activity of today's global economy. ICTs have been the leading enabler of this transformation. In order to better understand the impact of ICTs on Growth and Poverty Reduction it is important to understand the channels through which ICTs shape an economy.

The two major channels are as follows;

1. ICT-as a sector of the economy: ICTs as an industry and its value addition to other industries contribute towards the growth of the economy at large.
2. ICT-as enabler of socioeconomic development: ICTs enhance the social impact of developmental projects.

This facilitating and enabler role becomes apparent by looking at the following sub-categories

- ICTs aid in enhancing human productivity and creating resource efficiencies by extending tools for optimizing contribution.
- By providing access to information and shrinking time and space ICTs have opened up a wide new range of opportunities for their users.
- There is a dire need to capitalize on the true potential of ICTs in areas of economic growth, empowerment, education, health, and environment.
- Lack of resources should not become an impediment in using ICTs to improve socio-economic conditions. The government should follow a pragmatic approach and use all available technologies for growth enhancement and poverty reduction. Pakistan has taken steps in the right direction; however it has an extra mile to go⁹⁰.

C.1.12 Public Health Agencies

The national response of Pakistan's health system to COVID-19 was assessed by applying a framework of three distinct tiers. The first tier assessed politico-economic ecosystems: lockdown procedures, contact-screening, monetary/organisational arrangements for economically deprived groups, and travel restrictions. The second tier assessed intervention measures according to six building blocks of WHO: strategic vision highlighted by National Action Plan COVID-19, inadequacy and urban bias of healthcare professionals, expanded bed capacity, enhanced laboratory diagnostic capacity and financial assistance. The third tier of community participation revealed that the majority of the population was abiding by restrictions, but sporadic instances of orthodox religious gatherings were facilitating community spread. We recommend private health sector coordination with public facilities and call for deployment of non-practicing health professionals. The neighborhood-warden-system should be introduced at the union council level with the help of community level volunteers to facilitate enforcement of quarantines and responding to emerging community needs.

⁸⁹ <https://www.ncsw.gov.pk/Detail/MWI0MzkwYjgtYTg4ZC00NDFiLTg3YWItYzA0ZWUzZjQwNWVm>

⁹⁰ https://www.sbp.org.pk/reports/quarterly/FY07/first/Special_Section_2.pdf

C.1.13 Health Workforce

Pakistan has faced a shortage of doctors, nurses, and allied staff (doctor–population ratio: 1:1300; nurse–patient ratio: 1:50; nurses/ midwives per 1,000 populations: 0.66), along with an imbalance in distribution, with a scarcity of health professionals in rural areas. There are 194,000 registered medical practitioners in Pakistan, of which 30,000 work in ICUs. Conditions have not yet been put under further strain during the COVID-19 pandemic. The country has focused its efforts on the prevention and control of the new coronavirus. The number of health professionals in public- and private-sector hospitals is still sufficient to deal with the incoming cases of COVID-19. They are also involved in the reverse tracing of household contacts of positive cases. However, it is anticipated that a severe shortage of health professionals could arise in the country with an increasing number of COVID-19 patients; because there is no pragmatic plan to respond. The National Institute of Health (NIH) in Islamabad has begun a series of training sessions for health professionals and clinical laboratories on infection prevention and control. The Sindh Healthcare Commission along with Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Society of Pakistan (MMIDSP) has been conducting regular online sessions for healthcare professionals on infection prevention and control practices and correct use of PPE. So far, more than 700 healthcare professionals have benefitted from these sessions in the country.

All the data pertaining to COVID-19 in Pakistan flow from district to provincial to federal level, where the data are assimilated by the NIH. In some districts, the WHO staff also provide support in terms of data management. Hospital, laboratory, screening, and quarantine data (that is, suspected cases in hospitals; those discharged, admitted and expired; total tests performed and total tests positive; travelers screened at the points of entry and number of suspected cases; and number of people quarantined at home or in facilities) are typically presented in the form of “daily situation reports” with provincial breakdowns. However, there could be gross underreporting of data because the private health sector is only marginally represented in the information provided, and not all the districts are reporting, particularly in rural areas.

C.1.14 Health Systems Financing

With its limited healthcare budget, Pakistan is doing everything it can to tackle the menace of COVID-19. Sindh province released 7.21 billion rupees to combat COVID-19, of which 6.9 billion rupees were given to the Sindh health department to procure medicines, equipment, generators, food, sanitizers, testing kits, etc. The federal government released an 1.2 trillion rupees (roughly \$7 billion) in an economic plan to minimize the economic damage to vulnerable segments of society.⁴¹ There has been a massive number of donations to the Prime Minister’s Corona Relief Fund, and the country has received assistance from the World Bank in the form of \$200 million in financial aid. However, the country still struggles to make the two ends meet⁹¹.

C.2. Major activities and programs carried out by CSOs

Many NGOs including HRCP and AwazCDS-Pakistan have recorded responses of citizens on their satisfaction on initiatives taken by Government.

C.2.1 The HRCP’s Analytical Fact-finding Study

⁹¹ https://icpsp.pk/oas/mpdf/generate_pdf.php?string=RjMrVTNGb0MzRFZGeGhiTIY0QlJqZz09

The study finds that the pandemic has eroded people's trust in, and respect for, ruling institutions and the governing elite. The health emergency has exacerbated existing structural discrimination and inequalities, and laid bare misplaced socioeconomic priorities. The report includes a survey of a cross-section of citizens countrywide, of whom only 25pc thought the steps taken by the federal government had been effective in tackling Covid-19. Around 94pc felt that wage labour had been the most affected by the pandemic. More than half were concerned that religious minorities would be discriminated against in the distribution of relief items or access to healthcare, and around 70pc felt that women had become increasingly vulnerable to domestic violence.

Women's health, employment, and domestic abuse are areas of special concern that need immediate attention. Governments and civil society must not lose sight of the vulnerability of religious minorities, persons living with disabilities, the elderly, and transgender persons, especially in terms of their access to healthcare and aid distribution. The problems identified in access to online education and connectivity must be rectified at the earliest. Serious attention must also be paid to the state of Pakistan's prisons, which are especially susceptible to infectious diseases.

HRCF believes that there is a defining time for government at all levels as their performance will be judged in relation to how they have handled this crisis, and there is much that can still be done to mitigate its effects. The report has recommended that the federal government must bring back parliamentary oversight to all decision making, and address institutional imbalances in the interest of democracy. The collaborative and coordinated policy effort must involve the federal, provincial and district governments in order to put forward a united front⁹².

C.2.2 Citizens responses taken by AwazCDS-Pakistan

AwazCDS-Pakistan and its 46 partner organizations are working together in 45 districts across the country including A J & K and Gilgit Baltistan under its Ujala Program. Under Covid-19 Pandemic, they conducted observational surveys and the report is based on 129 observatory surveys conducted at 129 cash and other relief distribution sites in 44 districts (Annexure-a) including 10 districts from each of the four provinces and 02 each from Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. Surveys carried out at cash distribution places to observe some of the basic indicators like accessibility, taking care of health & safety protocols, transparency in cash transfer, witness discipline and coverage of most vulnerable sections of society like PWDs, Transgender, minorities / other socially excluded groups etc. in the said program. Other than observing Ehsaas cash grant distribution, they also observed the ration distribution activities conducted by non-governmental/ other service providing welfare and humanitarian organizations and came across following findings:

1. Out of 129, 74.42% sites were the distribution points of Ehsaas cash grants; Whereas, 25.58% sites were of non-governmental/ private charities where ration, food and other essential items including sanitizers, masks and soaps were distributed among needy.
2. Observers were asked if the distribution points were reachable and in the easy access of people, 87.6% observers responded yes whereas 12.4% of observers did not agree and found the distribution places distant and hard to reach.
3. 68.2% Observers witnessed that measures and protocols for health & safety were followed at most of the distribution locations, whereas 31.8% observers found the distribution points untidy and unhygienic.

⁹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1570247>

4. Social distance was not maintained completely in any of the province and region. Nationally, 55.8% observers were satisfied on maintaining social distance by people while distribution activities were carried out and 44.2% observers were not satisfied.
5. The non-serious conduct of people towards the adherence of safety measures and protocols as only 27.9% observers confirmed that people were following protocols to keep themselves safe from COVID-19.
6. The distribution staff were observed abiding by the safety protocols by using gloves, masks, sanitizers etc. as stated by 69% observers but still 31% observers stated that distribution staff and other co-workers did not follow government's directives regarding personal safety protocols.
7. Separate places for PWDs were not allocated at distribution points with average 61.24%. Other than allocation of separate areas, it was also observed that there was no such arrangement of wheelchair, ramps etc. for the deserving PWDs who were there for collecting their cash. TGs were also not given priority during the distributions of cash grants and other relief items except in Punjab with 35.71% agreement of observers.
8. Only 37.21% observers agreed for the availability of separate places for elderly people so they could not wait for long and not to get mixed in large gathering as elderly people are supposed to get virus easily due to their fragile health conditions.
9. During cash distributions, elderly people were also somehow given priority to receive Ehsaas cash grant on urgency basis as confirmed by 57.36% observers.
10. Most of the staff found friendly and helpful. Cash amounts were given to people with their complete contentment. In case of any issue like missing finger prints of any elder person, staff was found sympathetic and supportive in explaining them the issue and way out for claiming their amounts.
11. 95.5% observers confirmed that people were provided with complete amounts and proper evidence and record were being maintained through bio-metric verifications. Nobody was given amount in absentia or in place of relative of any beneficiary or if biometric was not verifiable at Ehsaas cash grants distribution centers⁹³.

C.3 National assessment of Leaving No One Behind in times of COVID-19

AwazCDS-Pakistan and its 44 Ujala partners carried out National survey in their respective 44 district headquarter to collect basic data on some of the basic indicators included information of Ehsaas Cash Grant Program, its process and challenges faced by them. They also tried to understand how much vulnerable groups are aware from Corona virus, their economic challenges, status of behavioral changes, inclusion of most vulnerable groups of society and if elected representatives have played their role in educating and facilitating public⁹⁴.

⁹³ <http://awazcgs.org.pk/observational-survey-on-ehsaas-cash-grant-distribution/>

⁹⁴ <http://awazcgs.org.pk/national-assessment-of-ehsas-cash-grant-program-lnob/>

The findings are based on 3,997 responses received from 44 districts including 10 districts from each of the four provinces and 02 each from Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

	Punjab		KP		Sindh		Balochistan		AJK		GB		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Women Headed Family	31.8%	314	43.3%	363	34.0%	394	43.5%	276	37.8%	76	43.8%	77	37.5%	1500
Person with Special Abilities or family member	24.7%	244	28.0%	235	27.0%	313	33.4%	212	58.2%	117	34.1%	60	29.5%	1181
Religious Minority	19.6%	194	17.0%	143	24.4%	282	19.2%	122	3.0%	6	22.2%	39	19.7%	786
Transgender Community	23.9%	236	11.7%	98	14.6%	169	3.9%	25	1.0%	2	0.0%	0	13.3%	530
Total	100.0%	988	100.0%	839	100.0%	1158	100.0%	635	100.0%	201	100.0%	176	100.0%	3997

Out of total, 37.5% women headed families, 29.5% PWDs, 19.7% Religious minorities and 13.3% Transgender community were surveyed. Sindh came out with highest number of respondents (1158) engaged followed by Punjab (988) and KP (839). Some of the findings are shared below:

1. **90.73%** women headed families, **93.48%** PWDs, **91.86%** Religious minorities and **89.06%** Transgender out of total respondents from the respective categories shared that they are aware of Government's Ehsas Cash Grant Program.
2. Out of all four categories, 70.72% respondents told that they received timely response from Ehsas Cash Grant. 67.66% respondents shared they have received validation from them but only 27.01% have received cash grant.
3. Out of all four categories, **91.45%** respondents expressed that they received complete amount of PKRs 12,000/- as per Government's promise. But only **32.97%** respondents were happy from the cash amount as they think this is minimum amount being provided in this difficult time.
4. Out of 3384 respondents, **91.9%** said that they have faced economic changes at family level due to corona virus. From all four categories, **64.70%** respondents stated that they are facing economic distress/ less income whereas, **52.55%** shared they became unemployed due to economic situation in COVID-19.
5. When asked about the satisfaction on health services provided by Government in times of Covid so only **36.50%** shared their response of "satisfactory". Whereas, Religious minorities found least satisfied with health services during COVID with **34.10%**. Among provinces, AJ&K remained at top with least satisfied with **81.59%** followed by Balochistan and KP with **71.65%** and **67.70%** respectively.
6. Though, respondents were found very concerned about their children's education as **87.77%** respondents think that education of their children is badly affected by corona virus. Women headed families were found most concerned about children's education with **90.33%**. Among provinces and regions, AJ&K came out with highest % considering children' education is badly affecting with **99%** followed by KP and GB with **92.97%** and **91.48%** respectively.

7. Among provinces, KP came out with highest % of 88.32 to share that mental distress has increased among people followed by Punjab, AJ&K, Sindh and GB with 83.50%, 83.08%, 81.09% and 80.11% respectively.
8. 56.67% respondents believe that violence against women including physical, verbal, psychological, misbehaving etc. has increased during Covid-19. 58.20% women from category "women headed families" agreed with the increased rate of violence against women.
9. 33.73% respondents believe that violence against transgender community including physical, verbal, psychological, misbehaving etc. has increased during Covid-19. 59.250% transgender from category "Transgender" agreed with the increased rate of violence against them.
10. 55.92% respondents believe that violence against children including physical, verbal, psychological, misbehaving etc. has increased during Covid-19. out of all four categories, Transgender came out with high % with opinion of increased violence against children with 57.55% followed by women headed families with 56.20%.
11. 41.78% respondents believe that violence against PWDs including physical, verbal, psychological, misbehaving etc. has increased during Covid-19. 52.64% transgender agreed with the increased rate of violence against PWDs followed by PWDs themselves with 41.66%.
12. While asking about the discrimination, 26.72% respondents of category "Religious minority" shared that they have faced discrimination during COVID period. Out of that, not being included into relief package came out as highest form of discrimination with 59.05%. Overall, 47.37% people think that they were not provided with any relief package.
13. Among provinces, 93.03% respondents from AJ&K shared that no elected representative came for their facilitation during COVID followed by second highest % in Balochistan with 87.56%.
14. However, overall 39.03% respondents were satisfied from Governments' initiatives to tackle Corona virus. But at the same time 83.49% respondents expressed that government should continue awareness campaign to protect people from COVID-19.

D. Challenges and Assessments about COVID-19 and Civic Space

D.1 SWOT Analysis and Assessment

Pakistan	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and inexpensive workforce • Economic corridor prospects with China • Willingness for implementation of SDGs • Democratic practices prevailing from last decade. • Pakistan’s poverty reduction strategy is implemented. • Continuous efforts for accountability and transparency to eradicate corruption in the country. • Strategic geopolitical positioning of Pakistan for economics, trade and international relationship. • Counter terrorism strategy did wonders. • Dealing with COVID proved as brilliant strategy. • Reform and strengthening of political institutions in the country. • Currently, 64 percent of the nation is younger than 30 and 29 percent of Pakistanis are between 15 and 29. • Natural resources including minerals and marines. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instable political situation in the country. • Less harmonization between bureaucracy and Government. • Lack of data and monitoring mechanisms for evidence based policy; • Weak governance and less accountability mechanism • Inadequate coordination among different department of government. • Less engagement with private sector for tapping resources. • Lack of local government system in the country. • Gap of SDGs localization. • Violation of basic human rights. • Less force of Health Care providers. • Influence of religion in the country. • Less engagement of Government and civil society. • Huge population with less resources. • Less educational level cause spread of rumors • Low level of awareness. • Shrinking spaces of Civil society • Lack of implementation on existing laws and policies. • Uneducated and unproductive youth bulge • Political victimization has increased • Drastic increase in inflation rate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities • CPEC interventions and all weather friendship with China. • Partnership for development in regard to SDGs with Private sector for international investment. • Scope and potential of digitalization of economy and business. • Huge potential of Blue economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats • High level of international debt • COVID-19 pandemic disrupts NGOs' activities and funding opportunities. • Due to the economic recession, people are becoming less concerned about social issues. • Conflicted relationship with neighboring country India. • Foundation of existence of COVID 19 is still unknown. • Geopolitical position of Pakistan brings high security risk. • Impact on the daily life, work, and psychology of the public due to pandemic. • Impact of COVID 19 on national economy

D.2 Challenges and Assessment about COVID-19 and Civic Space in Pakistan

Lockdown is the only effective precaution being used by most of the states in the COVID-19 crisis. It has added economic hardships to those who depend on daily earnings and irregular payments. It has also added to the frustration of well-off people, as the virus has brought their social life to a halt. In addition to Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs) and precautionary measures such as hand washing and physical distancing, demand for psychological support is also on a rise, as many people confined inside their homes are unable to handle their anxieties and stress. Pakistan is no exception.

The ministry of Human Rights announced on March 30th 2020, that they were setting up a helpline, but human rights activists say it is too little and too late. First, the helpline is based in Islamabad, and secondly it is not in the reach of most people. Those who tried to call the helpline faced message recording machines, and they never got a call back. This is a common story of most of the helplines in Pakistan in ordinary situations, let alone in crisis situations.

Both the Department of Women Development and the Department of Human Rights in Sindh were running helplines, but the provincial commissions and ministries are closed due to the lockdown and so are their helplines, as these were not considered as “essential services.” In such a situation, it is difficult to find an exact picture of the human rights situation during the coronavirus lockdown and the mass confusion⁹⁵.

However, the challenges of poverty reduction are exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic because of:

- i. A global decline in economic activity and oil prices, which is likely to have an impact on remittances and slow down domestic consumption growth/internal demand;
- ii. Declining demand for Pakistani goods amongst its major trading partners, particularly USA, UK, and Europe;
- iii. Negative impact on the informal sector which provides livelihoods for the majority of the poor and for the segments of population more likely to fall back into poverty;
- iv. Measures aimed at containing the spread of the disease such as closure of construction as well as manufacturing units, closures of restaurants, trading activities etc. are likely to affect both the formal and informal sector the most where capacity to buffer shocks is limited; and
- v. Lower capacity of the poorest households to implement mitigation strategies and to protect themselves from contagion (limited access to water, poor sanitation and overcrowding, financial barriers to exercising preventative health measures)⁹⁶.

D.3 National Action Plan (NAP) for COVID-19

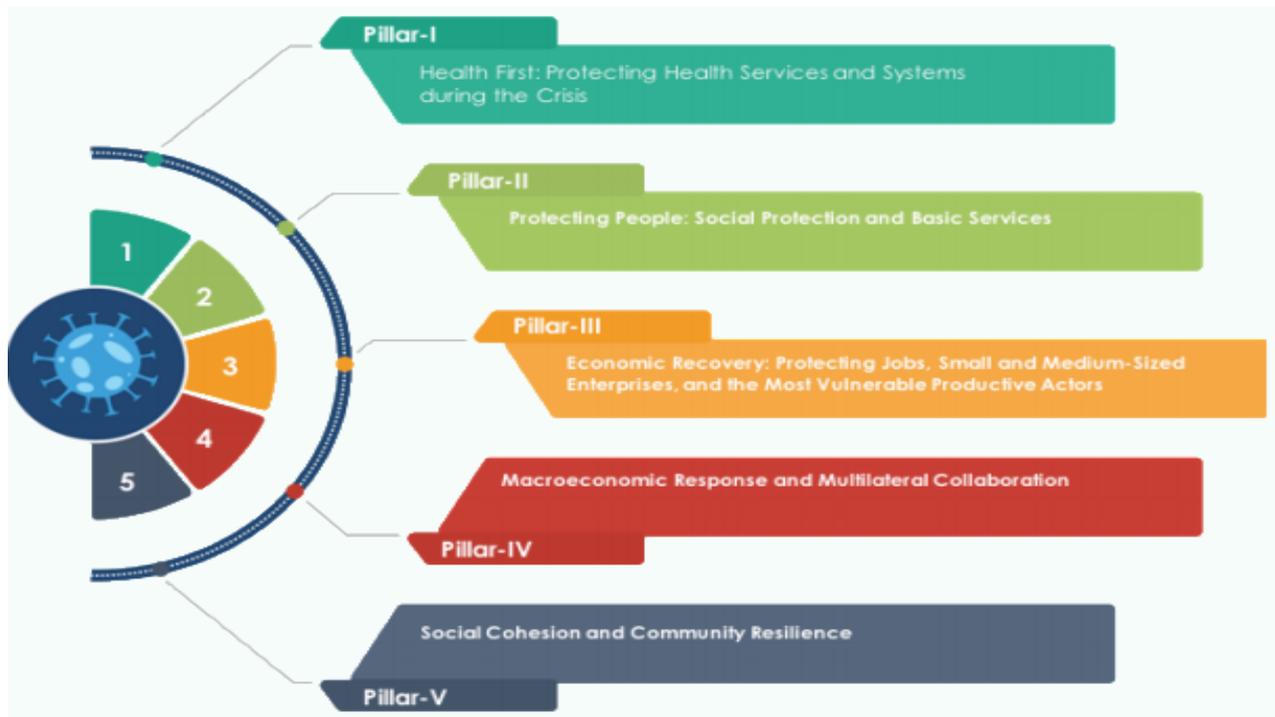
The NAP aims to: (i) contain and respond to the outbreak in a timely and efficient manner; (ii) prioritize financial resources and increase the domestic and international investment for country emergency preparedness (iii) implement emergency preparedness actions by strengthening inter-sectoral collaboration with government sectors, private sector and civil society at the provincial level. The plan covers planning and coordination mechanisms, laboratory support, food security, logistics, communication, infection prevention and control at PoEs and health facilities, trainings for health workers, human resource

⁹⁵ <https://nhrf.no/blog/pakistan-covid-19-and-the-human-rights-crisis>

⁹⁶ [file:///C:/Users/Acer/Downloads/Pakistan%20-%20COVID-19%20Socio-economic%20Impact%20Assessment%20and%20Response%20Plan%201%20May%202020%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Acer/Downloads/Pakistan%20-%20COVID-19%20Socio-economic%20Impact%20Assessment%20and%20Response%20Plan%201%20May%202020%20(2).pdf) (page 9)

management, quarantine preparedness, isolation hospitals, surveillance, reduced community exposure, and monitoring and evaluation. A National Emergency Coordination Committee and Command and Control Centre has been established at the national level with provincial representation and relevant stakeholders (Ministries of Finance, Interior, Planning, Foreign Affairs, Health, Pakistan Army, National Disaster Management Authority, National Institute of Health etc.) to monitor the response. The Prime Minister chaired a meeting of the National Security Council on March 13, 2020 to ensure implementation of the nation-wide response and addressed the nation on March 17. A COVID-19 Secretariat has been set up at the Planning Commission to help with a coordinated economic and social response to COVID-19⁹⁷.

The Framework for Impact Assessment and Response Plan takes guidance from the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. It is based on five pillars, anchored in the core objectives and principles of saving lives, and protecting rights of people living under the duress of the pandemic with particular focus on the most vulnerable countries, groups, and people who risk being left behind.



⁹⁷ [file:///C:/Users/Acer/Downloads/Pakistan%20-%20COVID-19%20Socio-economic%20Impact%20Assessment%20and%20Response%20Plan%201%20May%202020%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Acer/Downloads/Pakistan%20-%20COVID-19%20Socio-economic%20Impact%20Assessment%20and%20Response%20Plan%201%20May%202020%20(2).pdf) (pg-9)

E. Action Plans, Proposals and Recommendations

E.1 Action plans and proposals to CSOs

Following action plans are proposed as follow up of TDF2021 related to,

E.1.1 COVID-19

- Since the THIRD wave of COVID-19 is in full swing in Pakistan and in the region therefore a robust sensitization campaign for public awareness may be launched through media and civil society based on the past learning & experience
- Multi-stakeholder's consultative processes to understand impacts of COVID-19 on human development policies and structures at national and regional level to suggest appropriate and doable way forward

E.1.2 SDGs

- COVID-19 has shattered the economies across the world that will have implications on global human development instruments like SDGs. Financing for SDGs was already miserable and after COVID-19 it is expected to be further decline so what will be the future of SDGs? Civil societies at national and regional level may initiate multi-stakeholders dialogue and suggest appropriate measures on how to achieve SDGs in the current scenario?
- Many national governments have prepared their SDGs National Priority Framework to achieve SDGs in due time however this is important that CSOs should also develop Civil Society Priority Frameworks on SDGs at national and regional level. Such frameworks would be helpful in holding governments accountable on their global and national commitments

E.1.3 Democracy, Civic Space and Human Rights

- Today democracy, civic space and human rights are in danger in Pakistan and in the region whereas all the nation states have commitments under various national and global instruments including Constitutions, laws, UN conventions, SDGs etc. It would be good to identify government commitments related to democratic values & culture including civic spaces and human rights to develop **Civic Charter of Demand**.
- Multi-stakeholders dialogue among parliamentarians, media, political parties, CSOs, academics, labour unions and private sector may also be initiated at national and regional level to achieve demands under Civic Charters.

E.2 Proposal and Recommendation to the Government

- The learning curve for COVID-19 is steep; relying on data and evidence-based policy making is paramount to saving lives.
- Decisions must be based on an 'integrated framework' of top-down and bottom-up policymaking.
- Invest in the neglected public health sector through sustainable programmes.
- Public engagement through effective government messaging is instrumental
- Adopt disaster preparedness and build resilience across the entire governance structure.

E.3 Suggestions and Recommendations for Global Cooperation among Governments and CSOs

- Developed nations should make sure the equitable availability of COVID-19 vaccines/ doses among all countries regardless of any discrimination on the basis of regions, income and wealth
- Governments and global institutions should ensure COVID-19 vaccination free for all without any discrimination and delay
- Developed nations should abide by their commitments regarding 0.7% of the Official Development Assistance to the poor nations with consistency and fully
- Fair and free trade opportunities need to be created among developed and poor / developing nations
- Local and global CSOs sector need to be strengthened and financed adequately to enhance people to people contact, research and development opportunities
- Regional cooperation institutions and multilateral forums need to be strengthened for sustainable and efficient utilization of resources
- Affirmative actions need to be taken to reduce social, gender, economic and political inequalities at global, regional, national and local levels
- Financing for SDGs is desperately needed through global cooperation and national multiyear developmental budgets
- There should adequate investment on mass sensitization against COVID-19 so as they should avail vaccinations

E.4 Proposals and Recommendations to Development Cooperation Agencies (like KOICA, JICA, etc.)

- Regional Cooperation Agencies should create and facilitate regional forums on SDG for more collaborative actions to influence governments to address socio-economic, gender based and political inequalities from Asia
- Multi-stakeholders engagement processes need to be initiated under the umbrella of regional agencies like JICA & KOICA etc. for regional peace, trade & development, enhanced civic spaces and freedom of expression and association
- Regional Cooperation Agencies should push developing nations of South Asia to regularize the annual sessions of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to combat poverty, inequality, climate changes, terrorism and violent extremism

E.5 Proposals to the Tokyo Democracy Forum 2021

TDF should do advocacy with;

- Global funding agencies and bilateral donors to ensure investment on local civil society organizations for more sustainable, inclusive and participatory solutions for addressing chronic issues related to freedom of expression and association, civic spaces and liberalization of conservative societies
- G20 to encourage financing for sustainable and inclusive development as well as to ensure free COVID-19 vaccines for all
- Developed nations to ensure Official Development Assistance (ODA) for developing nations and it should be linked with progress on SDGs and other global commitments.

E.6 Advocacy Action Calendar 2021 and Beyond

- Mobilization campaigns for sensitization of masses to take COVID-19 seriously and follow SOPs strictly.
- Joint advocacy campaigns to demand free vaccine for all in timely manner

- Collective advocacy interventions of CSO alliances like GCAP, ADA, APSD etc. during inter-governmental forums like APFSD 2021, ASEAN, SAARC and other related meetings and forums
- Sharing national and regional updates as well as citizens’/ alternate VNRs on the accomplishments for the implementation of SDGs during HLPF in July 2021
- Sharing Citizens’ Position Paper for Food Security & Sustainable Livelihoods during UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021
- Mobilizations campaigns at national, regional and global level to hold governments and private sector accountable to fulfill their promises for equitable, just and inclusive societies during UNGA in September 2021.
- Campaigns to demand fundamental freedoms and human rights such as freedom of expression, assembly and association at the eve of international human rights day, December 2021.

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