

4. Pakistan's 148th position in the Global Gender Gap Report 2025 highlights severe gender inequality. Identify the major contributing factors to this ranking and propose strategies to promote gender parity in the country.

Gender Inequality in Pakistan:

Introduction:

Pakistan's dismal ranking of 148th out of 148 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2025 starkly illustrates the structural and persistent nature of gender inequality in Pakistan. Despite number of constitutional and legal frameworks, the score ^{has} remained poor. Pakistan's Eastern neighbour, India has showed better ranking at 131st out of 148 countries.

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A number of factors such as lack of educational opportunities, limited political participation, poor health facilities, limited economic participation of women and others, contribute greatly to the dismal figures. Pakistan needs to devise various strategies and undergo several structural reforms to improve its ranking on gender gap.

- Pakistan's Gender Gap outlook, 2025:

Pakistan Ranking = 148th

Score = 0.56

Gender Gap Closed = 57.2 %

Women - focused projects = 0.2% of PSDP

Women Economic Participation = 34.7 %

Labour force participation = 22 %

Health and Survival disparities = 131st in ranking

Political empowerment = 20% parliamentary seats and zero ministerial roles.

Literacy rate for women = 52.8 %

(World Economic Forum)

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- Factors contributing to dismal ranking:-

1. Economic Participation and opportunities:

Pakistan scored 34.7% in this pillar, which is one of the lowest globally.

- Pakistan's female labour participation is 22%, low as compared to South Asia's average percentage of 37%.
- Wage gap is another significant concern. Pakistan's woman earn 18-20% of men's income for similar work. Besides, 68% women are employed in agriculture that is largely undocumented.

Reasons:

There are numerous reasons for these figures.

- Sexual harassment at workplace.
- Informal economy dependence makes women's work invisible in national accounts.
- Lack of equal opportunities for men and women in economic avenues.
- Patriarchal norms such as "Chador Char

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"Dewari" etc, depict the role of women as a vessel of reproduction only.

2- Political Empowerment:

In Pakistan, 20% women occupy seats in parliament, mostly via reserved seats. ~~Mostly~~ ministries are held by men in 2025.

Reasons:

- Tokenistic positions are assigned to women, limited to reserved seats, not mainstream constituencies.
- Women are excluded from "hard portfolios" like finance, commerce, defence. This shows their symbolic representation.
- Besides, male politicians give derogatory remarks about their female counterparts, thus demoralizing them.

3- Problems in Educational Attainment:

According to the 2023 Population and Housing census, Pakistan's literacy rate is

60.65% , with males at 68% , females at 52.8% .

- Pakistan's out-of-school children are 38% about 26 million , out of which 35% are male and 42% are female .
- Moreover, less than 5% women are in STEM jobs.

Reasons:

- Socio-cultural factors in conservative areas keep girls out-of-school after puberty .
- Remote schools in rural areas .
- Gender bias in curricula and discouragement from pursuing STEM or leadership fields .
- Early marriages are also the major factors that prevent the girls from pursuing education . Pakistan is at 6th position in child brides .

4- Health issues and facilities for women:

Pakistan is ranked at 131st globally in health and survival . Pakistan is among

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the countries with high maternal mortality i.e., 186 deaths per 100,000 live births, whereas India has 103 deaths per 100,000 live births. Besides, 40% of women of reproductive age in Pakistan are anaemic.

Reasons:

- Low public spending on healthcare i.e., less than 1% of GDP.
- Social taboos around reproductive health reduce contraceptive use.
- Malnutrition and unequal healthcare access worsen the situation.

5- Policy and Governance Failures:

All the above issues are attributed to the policy and governance failures.

Despite repeated commitments, gender focused projects account for only 0.2% of the ~~total~~ total PSDP 2025-26. This is due to policy and administrative ~~inequality~~ setbacks that cannot be implemented

effectively.

6- Suppression of women rights:-

In Pakistan, women rights are not considered: neither fulfilled. A 2024 report by Sustainable Social Development organization reveals while globally 30% of women face violence in Pakistan, 90% of women have experienced violence in their lifetime. Gender-based violence leads to an estimated 80 million lost working days annually. According to SSDO, 5,339 rape cases were reported in Pakistan in 2024. There are number of cases where women are deprived of their basic rights such as in case of Sana Yousaf, murdered without any reason, Mahorang Balong has been detained illegally, murder of Qandeel Baloch in the name of honour-killing etc.,

• Strategies for Gender Parity in Pakistan:

Date _____

Pakistan needs to undergo various structural reforms as well as make improvements in the key sectors to create avenues for women.

1- Enhance Economic opportunities:

Pakistan needs to adopt the policy of "Equal pay for equal work" for both men and women. Besides, female labour participation needs to be enhanced by creating conducive workplace environment, anti-harassment policies and ~~good~~^{fair} remuneration for female labour. Pakistan needs to follow the successful strategy of Bangladesh through microfinancing to enhance female participation. Bangladesh enhanced to 37% through microfinance (Grameen Bank), provided loans to women and farmers on easy loan conditionalities to enable them to start their small-scale businesses. Pakistan should scale up women centric microfinance with interest subsidies, and replicate women's industrial clusters (garments, IT, freelancing

hubs) linked with export rebates.

2- Political empowerment of women:

Women must be encouraged to take important positions rather than tokenistic ones. They must be assigned local government seats so that they can be trained and able to make important decisions. Besides, Pakistan must enhance floor targets in cabinets and mandatory party nomination quotas, ensuring women lead finance, energy, and security portfolios, not just soft ministries.

3- Educational opportunities for women:

Government needs to build schools at the areas where schools are remote and keep them under strict administrative authority. Awareness campaigns must be launched via print and electronic media about the importance of women education. Moreover, STEM scholarships, apprenticeships and remote-work hubs for women must

be created to enhance female literacy.

4- Provision of health facilities to women:

The most important step that needs to be taken is gender-based budgeting, especially in health sectors. Women face more health problems than men. Therefore, gender-based budgeting should ^{be} aimed at improving ~~maternal~~ maternity health and reducing mortality rate.

5- Policy and Governance initiatives:

There are numerous laws and policies exist for reducing gender inequality.

- First, Government needs to strengthen the enforcement mechanism.
- Second, like India Government needs to adopt binding gender budgeting across federal and provincial PSDPs. India has allocated 5% of federal spending with project level tracking.
- Finally, Government must create local index for measuring gender gap instead of

relying only on international indices. Institutions like the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) operate more like donor-driven NGO rather than authority that can benchmark provinces and districts and hold policy makers accountable.

Conclusions

Gender Gap in Pakistan presented by World Economic Forum, represents an alarming situation. In Pakistan, women face number of issues that are created by the social fabric of the society. Therefore, Pakistan must have to change its course and make structural reforms in the major sectors to ensure women participation. The constitution of Pakistan provides all types of rights to women in various articles such as Article 25, 26, 37 and 140.

Pakistan is on the verge of a severe water crisis, further aggravated by India's actions threatening its water resources.

Examine the internal and external dimensions of this crisis and suggest viable policy response.

Water crisis in Pakistan:

Introduction:

Pakistan is on the verge of a severe water crisis, further aggravated by India's actions threatening its water resources. Pakistan's water scarcity is the product of converging internal failures with high water intensity in agriculture, low storage capacity, population growth etc., are compounded by climate change. The crisis has been aggravated by recent Indian actions on Himalayan hydropower and suspension of Indus water treaty. All these crises have pushed Pakistan into water scare country.

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Pakistan's annual per capita water availability has plummeted from about 5600 cubic meters in 1947 to just 930 cubic meters in 2025. Therefore, Pakistan must have to adopt viable strategies to overcome water crisis.

- Drivers of water crisis:

Drivers (Dimensions)



Domestic Drivers of
Crisis

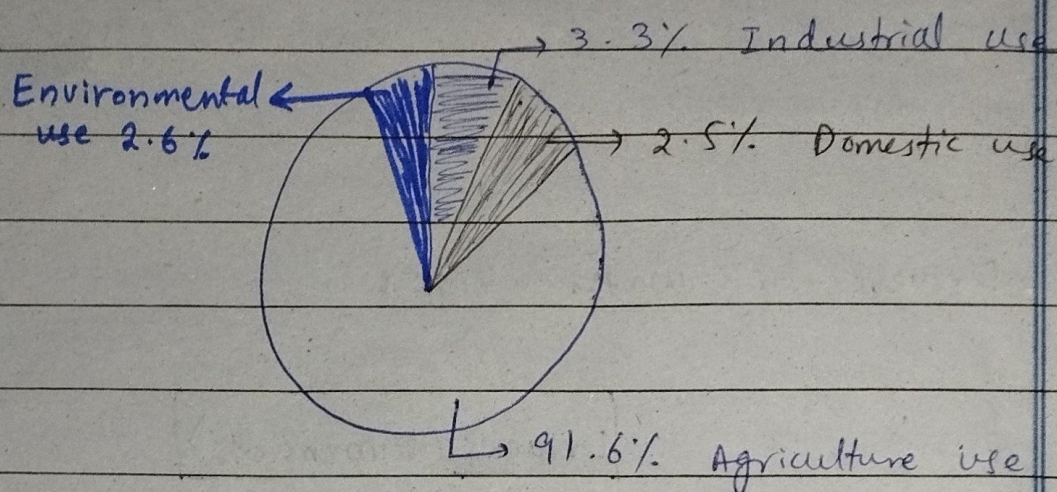
External Dimensions
of crisis

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Massive agricultural use• low water storage capacity• Population Growth• Excessive water wastage• Climate change and Hydrological volatility | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suspension of Indus Water Treaty.• India's water infrastructure |
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- Domestic Drivers of Crisis:

- a. Massive use in agriculture:

The agriculture sector of Pakistan consumes nearly 90% of nation's water.



Pakistan's agriculture sector use massive water due to following reasons.

- Use of water-intensive crops particularly rice and sugarcane. The area under rice cultivation surged by 41%, while sugarcane grew by 12% and maize cultivation has grown by 51%.
- Use of outdated irrigation techniques called flood irrigation
- Water is allocated for agriculture with respect to time rather than volume of

water.

b. low water storage capacity:

Pakistan is water scarce because it has low water storage capacity. The ministry of water resources informed that average water storage life in Pakistan is 36 days, whereas in India it is about 120 days. Besides, there is a delay in the construction of dams owing to various reasons such as funding constraints, political deadlock, technical challenges and other issues.

Diemer Basha Dam:

KP has expressed reservations about the dam's location and water sharing arrangements.

Mirani Dam

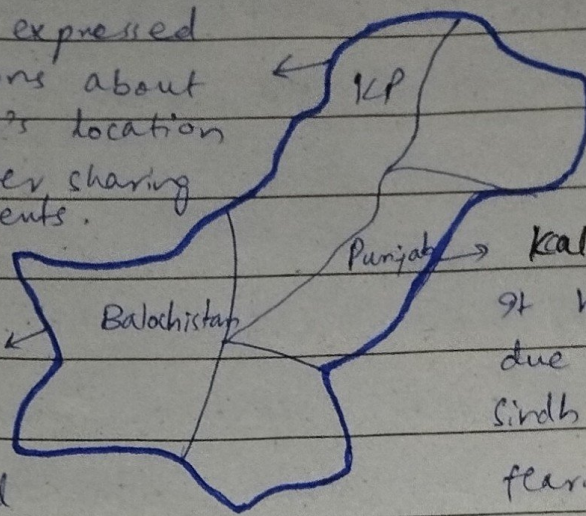
Tensions

between

Sindh and

Balochistan over

water distribution.



Punjab

Kalabagh dam

It has been controversial due to opposition from Sindh and KP,

fearing it will

reduce water

flow and benefit Punjab only.

Source: PIDE

So due to their issues, dam construction in Pakistan is delayed, hence lead to low water storage capacity.

c. Population Growth:

According to 7th National census, the population of Pakistan is 241.5 million.

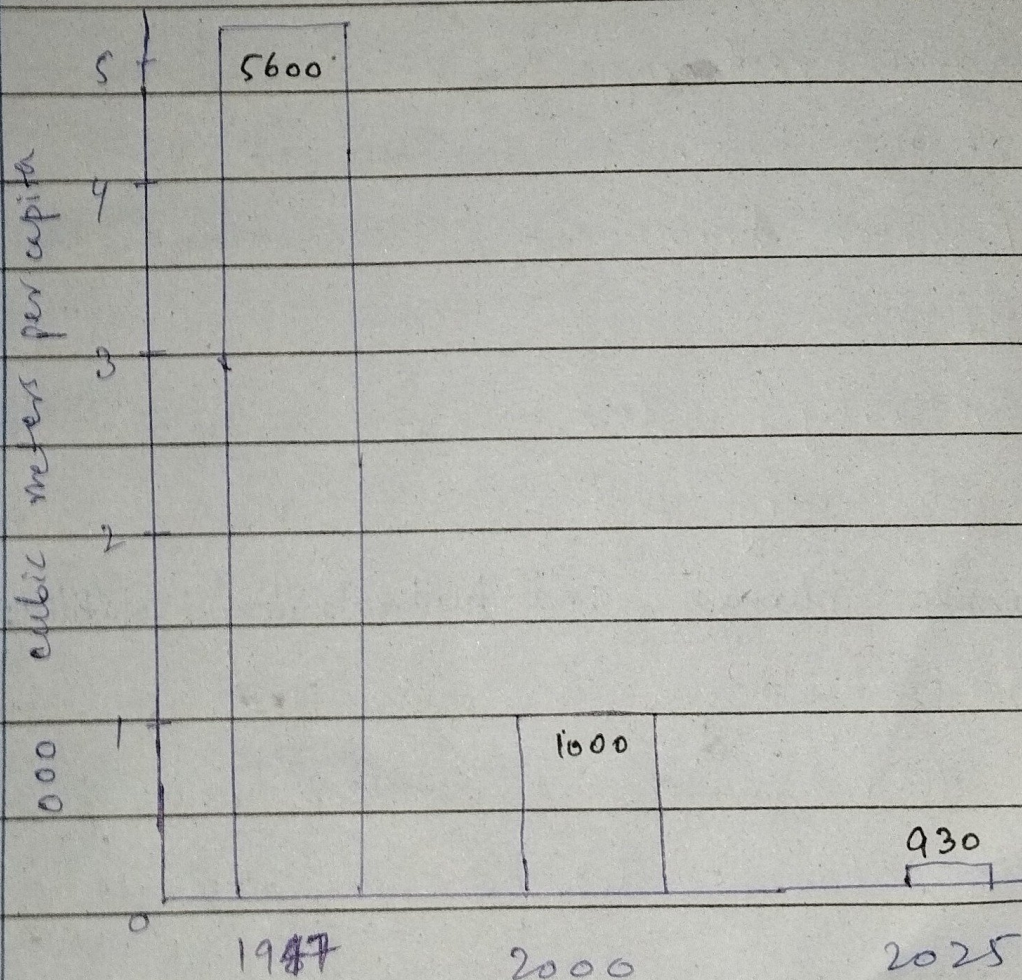
Every year population is increasing

by 2.55%. Millions of people are

adding to the cities every year. This

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stresses the water resources that are already scarce. Demand of water is increasing and sources are reducing. Pakistan meteorological Department has recorded that from September 1, 2024 to January 15, 2025, ~~40~~ 40% less rainfall occurred compared to previous years. Additionally, population growth has also increased the over-extraction of ground water, results in declined water sources.



Source : PIDE

d. Excessive water wastage:

Pakistan is also among the countries having highest wastage of water in Asia, in sea and agriculture. World Bank reported that:

More than 80% of water in Pakistan comes from monsoon and melting of glaciers in May, June, July and August. However, water utilization at this time is low because main agricultural crops do not need water at this time. Due to less utilization, Pakistan drains out this water into the sea.

Similarly, water usage in agriculture is also very high about 90%.

e. Climate change and hydrological volatility:

Climate change is also one of the main reasons of water scarcity in Pakistan. Climate change includes floods, droughts, erratic rainfall patterns and global warming etc., Climate change is

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turning Pakistan's water challenge into a hydrological crisis. It is both shrinking both the reliability and quality of freshwater resources.

- 2024 was the hottest year on record; heatwaves and rising transpiration level increase water requirements for all crops.

- Reduced rainfall is witnessed in 2025, which worsens the drought risk.

- External Dimensions (Drivers) of Crisis:

- a. India's actions like upstream projects on western rivers and suspension of Indus Water Treaty has further worsened the situation.

- a. India's water infrastructure:

- Construction of Reservoirs resulted in decline in the flow of rivers:

India has been building hydropower projects on the western rivers (Indus,

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Thelum and Chenab), on which Pakistan holds exclusive rights. These include Kishanganga, Rattle and Baglihar. The main problem was of their height and size. Kishanganga is 33 times more high than it was allowed. Pakistan has also filed case in arbitration court. Secondly, size of these hydropower projects is also big. Due to their enormous size, water storage capacity has also increased. Due to the construction of these hydropower projects and also diversion in the flow of rivers with the help of Wallar and Tulbul barrage results in reduced flow of water to Pakistan. These activities of India worsened the situation in already water scarce country.

b. Suspension of Indus Water Treaty:-

India has unilaterally suspended the Indus water Treaty after the Pahalgam incident. The Treaty survived for 65 years, where

there were some limitations. Now the situation has changed, India ^{has} stepped back from abiding by the rules of the treaty. Therefore, India can use it (water) as a coercive instrument by constructing more run-over-the-river projects or diverting water flows. Secondly, India can also disrupt the water flow by the Pakistan's irrigation patterns' predictability depending on seasonal flow.

• Viable policy options for Pakistan:-

Pakistan can adopt following strategies to cope up with water scarcity.

- 1- Crop zoning and restrictions for the crops like rice and sugarcane cultivation in high-stress areas like Punjab canal command areas. Shift subsidies away from sugarcane and rice to water-efficient crops like sesame, oil, pulses etc..
- 2- Use drip irrigation instead of flood irrigation technique. This will save 60%.

of water.

- 3- Expand storage capacity by building water reservoirs and dams through BOT projects.
- 4- Constitutional bodies like CCI and IRSA must develop a consensual agreement and redress grievances of the provinces.
- 5- Massive floods and cloudbursts are on one hand, natural calamities but by constructing more and more dams, these can be turned into an asset by storing the water.
- 6- Transboundary water diplomacy must be initiated by securing international mediation before India's any aggressive action, using water as a coercive tool.

Conclusion:

Water is the lifeline of all the creatures on the earth. It also holds a value of lifeline for the country which is based on agriculture. Unfortunate water scarcity is at alarming levels

compounded by various internal as well as external factors. Therefore, Pakistan must adopt climate smart techniques, reform agriculture sector and develop water storage capacity. Moreover, it is important to negotiate the treaty again that has been suspended by New Delhi, unilaterally.