

SECTOR ASSESSMENT (SUMMARY): EDUCATION

A. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

1. The education sector in Sindh Province faces significant challenges in terms of access to, and the quality of, education. Sector challenges are particularly acute at the secondary education level. Of the 22.8 million out-of-school children in Pakistan, 28% are in Sindh.¹ Sindh has the second-lowest gross enrollment ratios (GERs) and net enrollment rates (NERs), after Balochistan, among the four provinces at all education levels, despite growing absolute enrollments.² Progress in lifting enrollments has been uneven. Since school year (SY) 2008/09, GERs in Sindh have fallen at the primary and middle school levels, while increasing slightly at the high school level. The GER fell from 59% to 55% at the middle school level and rose from 47% to 51% at the high school level in SY2014/15. NERs are lower than GERs because of the large number of overage students in schools. This is due to low enrollments at the primary level and high dropout rates, especially after primary school, when 31% of grade 5 public school students drop out.³

2. **Access.** The lack of secondary schools is a major constraint to increasing enrollments in Sindh, especially in rural areas where there are fewer affordable private educational alternatives. Only about 10% of public schools in the province are secondary schools. In rural areas, this figure drops to just 7%. Districts such as Sujawal, Tharparkar, and Thatta score among the lowest on an index that measures the availability of post-primary schools relative to primary schools and the quality of school infrastructure.⁴ The lack of secondary schools can have a significant impact on girls' enrollments at that level because parents may not allow girls to attend distant schools.

3. Poor learning environments at the primary level also discourage continued school enrollment. This is of concern given that, in SY2016/17, only 33% of the province's public schools have buildings rated *satisfactory*, while 55% lack electricity, and 40% lack basic facilities. While the provision of basic facilities is better in secondary schools, they lack advanced facilities; for example, in SY2016/17, only 15% of the province's secondary schools had a physics laboratory and only 27% had a computer laboratory.⁵

4. Access challenges are exacerbated by significant disparities in access and learning by gender, socioeconomic groups, and districts. In SY2014/15, the NER for boys aged 14–15 years was 9 percentage points higher than that for girls (29% versus 20%) and the gap in the literacy rate for males and females aged 10 and older was 21 percentage points (70% versus 49%).⁶ Disparities across districts in Sindh are also stark, with educational indicators, such as primary school transition rates and literacy rates, in districts such as Badin, Matiari, Sanghar, Sujawal, Tharparkar, and Thatta falling below the provincial average (footnote 5).

¹ Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. 2017. *Pakistan Education Statistics 2016/17*. Islamabad.

² The gross enrollment ratio measures all students who, whatever their age, are enrolled at a given level of education (e.g., secondary) divided by the number of children of the appropriate age for that level of education. The net enrollment ratio measures all students of the appropriate age for that level of education (e.g., secondary) divided by the number of children of the appropriate age for that level of education.

³ Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2019. *School Education in Pakistan: A Sector Assessment*. Manila.

⁴ Alif Ailaan. 2018. *Five Years of Education Reform – Sindh: Wins, Losses and Challenges for the Future*. Islamabad.

⁵ Government of Sindh, School Education and Literacy Department (SELD). 2018. *Better Data, Better Governance: Sindh Educational Profile (2016/17)*. Karachi.

⁶ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. 2016. *Pakistan Living Standards and Measurement Survey 2014/15*. Islamabad.

5. **Quality.** Quality is also a significant challenge in the Sindh education sector. Learning levels are very low at the secondary level. The mean score in the province's grade 8 standardized achievement test for SY2016/17 was only 40% for language, 21% for mathematics, and 26% for science.⁷ Although low, the average score increased from 27.8% in 2015/16 to 30.3% in SY2016/17.⁸ Data for 2016 show that Sindh's grade 10 students performed poorly (in absolute terms and compared to the national average) on assessments designed to test their competency in mathematics and languages: 13.8% of them could not recognize numbers, 14.0% could not read the alphabet in English, and 13.8% could not read the alphabet in Urdu or Sindhi.⁹

6. The sector's poor performance is driven in part by weaknesses in the teacher workforce. Uneven deployment of teachers; lack of trained teachers, especially subject specialists; lack of female teachers in remote areas; and poor teacher motivation and accountability are major challenges. Although there were 151,000 public school teachers in Sindh in SY2016/17, fewer than 30% were women, only 20% were at the secondary level, and fewer than 1% were subject specialists. Previous hiring policies have resulted in a large pool of unqualified teachers in public schools—about 20% of teachers have no more than a higher secondary education qualification.¹⁰ Pre- and in-service teacher training requires substantial improvement. Teacher quality is adversely affected by an accountability framework that provides few incentives for teachers to perform. The poor quality of schools not only hinders learning, but also lowers enrollments as parents see little value in sending their children to school.

7. Weaknesses in teacher training, quality, management, and accountability are exacerbated by an outdated secondary education examination system, particularly for grades 9–12 where board examinations are mandatory for all students. Weaknesses in the current examination system include (i) an emphasis on lower-order learning that focuses on rote memorization rather than critical thinking; (ii) poor test preparation, including frequent repetition of examination items across years and uneven coverage of the curriculum; (iii) weak capacity of examination item writers and markers, which is exacerbated by the lack of university-level training programs in these subject areas; and (iv) rampant malpractice and corruption in the administration of board examinations.¹¹

8. **Sector financing and private involvement in education.** The Government of Sindh (GOS) increased education spending by 39% between 2014/15 and 2017/18. This helped to lift the share of education in the GOS's budget to 20%, or about 1.5% of provincial gross domestic product. However, the level of spending relative to gross domestic product remains well below the 4.0% target. Spending challenges are exacerbated by the fact that a significant proportion of allocated public funds—and particularly the development budget—remains unspent due to bottlenecks and capacity limitations that hinder effective and timely fund flows.

9. To improve education sector performance, the GOS has made greater use of public–private partnership (PPP) programs by expanding and refocusing the Sindh Education Foundation (SEF), a semiautonomous government body under the School Education and Literacy Department (SELD). The SEF operates several PPP programs, most of which involve per-student payments to private operators for the delivery of education services. The SEF's programs are mostly targeted at primary education, but it is also expanding assistance to secondary education. The GOS also introduced the education management organizations (EMO) model in 2015, under

⁷ Government of Sindh, SELD. Standardized achievement test V. 2016/17.

⁸ Footnote 4.

⁹ ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) Pakistan. 2017. *Annual Status of Education Report 2016*. Islamabad.

¹⁰ Footnote 4.

¹¹ Government of Pakistan. 2009. *National Education Policy 2009*. Islamabad.

which it contracts private partners to operate public schools. Providers are chosen through a competitive process and are subject to an accountability framework that incentivizes performance. Nongovernment organizations also play a significant role in Pakistan and in Sindh, both in policy advocacy and in the financing and delivery of education services. Many nongovernment organizations finance and deliver education services through philanthropy. Some also provide services to the GOS under SEF programs or through the EMO program.

10. **Opportunities.** The Sindh education sector faces significant challenges. To address these, the GOS has initiated reforms under the Sindh Education Sector Plan (SESP), 2014–2018.¹² Development partners worked closely with the GOS in preparing the plan and are doing the same with the new one, which will cover 2019–2023. The focus of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on secondary education complements the areas of focus of other development partners such as the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development, and the World Bank.

11. The SESP, 2014–2018 provides a useful platform for ADB to contribute to improvements in the performance of secondary education in the province. Any effort to improve secondary education in the province will need to involve both public and private schools given that both play a substantial role in the provincial education scene. The size of the private education sector in Sindh and the GOS's desire to explore innovative education PPP programs dovetails well with ADB's objective of increasing lending to the private sector and its experience with such programs in other countries. The growing role of the SEF and the introduction of the EMO program provide a big opportunity to expand quality and access by leveraging the large private education sector in Sindh.

B. Government's Sector Strategy

12. The 18th Constitutional Amendment of 2010 devolved responsibility for 17 sectors, including education, to provincial governments. The reform ushered in a new education policy framework for provincial governments, including a requirement for the state to provide free and compulsory quality education to children aged 5–16 years, and responsibility for policy areas that were previously shared with the federal government, including education standards, curriculum and policy, and planning. Since 2010, the GOS has introduced important policy reforms, including merit-based recruitment of teachers, standardized assessment of learning levels, and the expansion of PPPs.

13. Education is a priority sector for the GOS, as exemplified by its declaration of an education emergency in 2016. The education budget increased by more than 50% during fiscal year (FY) 2016/17–FY2018/19.¹³ The SESP, 2014–2018 outlines strategies to improve the performance of secondary education in Sindh. These include: (i) upgrading large elementary schools to secondary schools and large secondary schools to higher secondary schools; (ii) developing a policy for expanding secondary and higher secondary education in underserved areas, including with private sector assistance; (iii) conducting merit-based teacher recruitment according to school needs; (iv) improving the examination system by lifting the quality of teaching and learning in schools, enhancing the quality of paper setting and scoring, and improving the conduct of examinations; (v) developing better school infrastructure; (vi) setting district targets for the NER; (vii) prioritizing girls' schools; (viii) providing basic facilities to schools on a priority basis; and (ix)

¹² Government of Sindh, SELD. 2014. *Sindh Education Sector Plan, 2014–18*. Karachi.

¹³ Government of Sindh. 2018. *Budget 2018–19, Annual Budget Statement, Volume 1*. Karachi.

using innovations such as solar systems for electrical power where possible (footnote 11). The GOS is preparing the SESP, 2019–2023.

15. Governance issues remain significant in Sindh, including in the Sindh education sector. Much of the authority remains centralized despite the existence of district education offices. Corruption remains a significant concern. The GOS has taken several steps to improve sector governance by strengthening decision making at the school level; improving management and human resource information systems; and making greater use of technology, including introducing biometric verification of teacher attendance and real-time school-based monitoring. However, more remains to be done.

C. ADB Sector Experience and Assistance Program

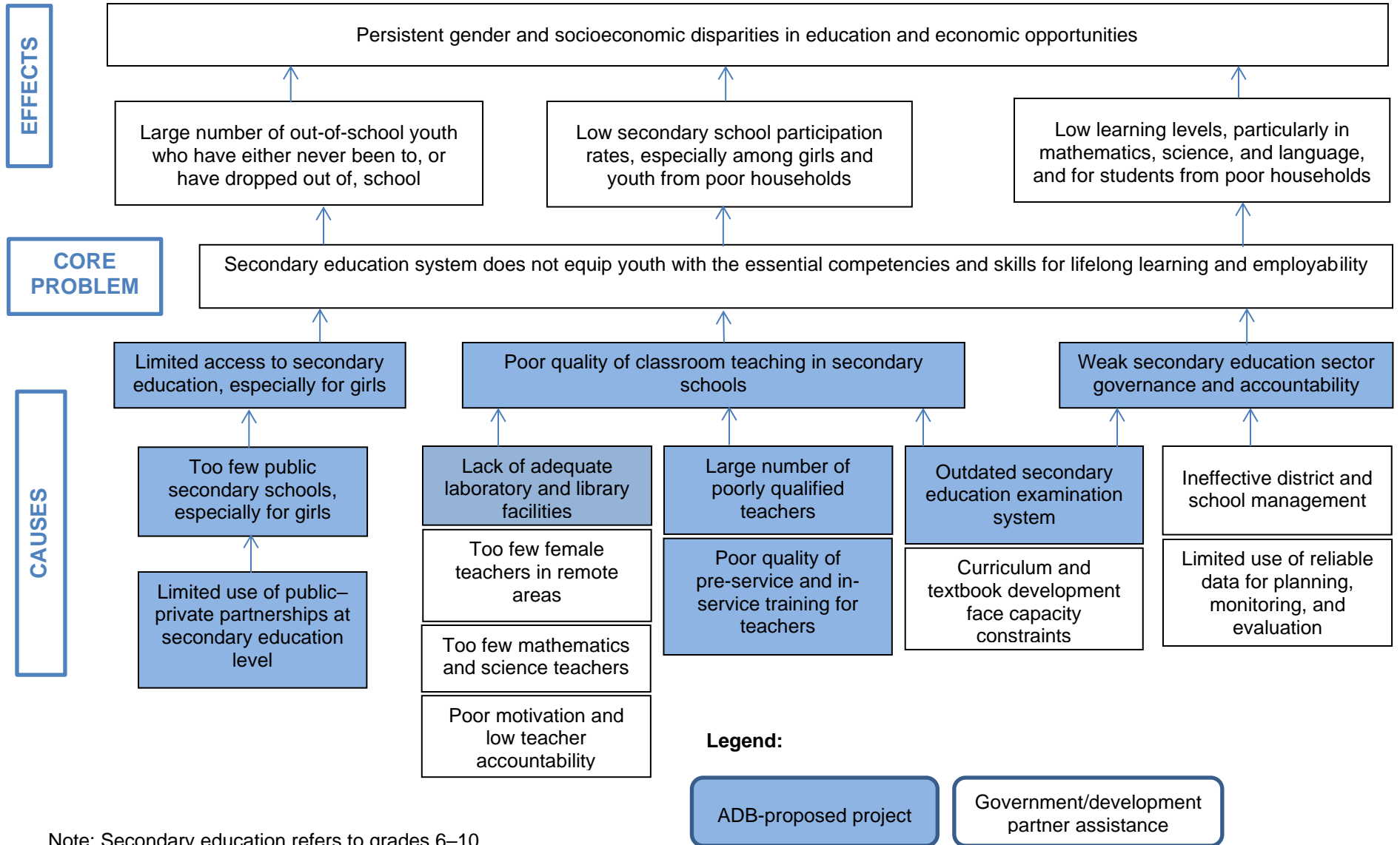
16. ADB has a long history of lending and technical assistance to education in Pakistan across a range of sectors and thematic areas, including school-level education, girls' education, technical and vocational education and training, teacher training, education planning, and science in secondary schools. Most recently, ADB financed a small-scale technical assistance project to identify education sector challenges and opportunities. This provided considerable opportunity for policy dialogue with the GOS and the federal government. With the Sindh Secondary Education Improvement Project, ADB will become the largest development partner supporting secondary education in the province.

17. The project heeds the lessons of ADB's education sector experience, including the importance of strong government commitment and ownership, as reflected in the SESP, 2014–2018, and the need to focus on government education priorities. In line with the target in ADB's Midterm Review of Strategy 2020 to increase education lending to 6%–10% of annual approvals, and the extensive challenges facing the sector, ADB foresees further increases in its education portfolio in Pakistan.¹⁴ The project supports three of the key operational priority areas of ADB's Strategy 2030: addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequalities, accelerating progress in gender equality, and strengthening governance and institutional capacity. ADB will provide additional financing in 2022 or 2023, subject to satisfactory project performance.

18. There may be cofinancing opportunities with bilateral development partners as ADB's involvement in the education sector in Sindh is established and expands.

¹⁴ ADB. 2014. *Midterm Review of Strategy 2020: Meeting the Challenges of a Transforming Asia and Pacific*. Manila.

Problem Tree for Secondary Education



Note: Secondary education refers to grades 6–10.
 Source: Asian Development Bank.