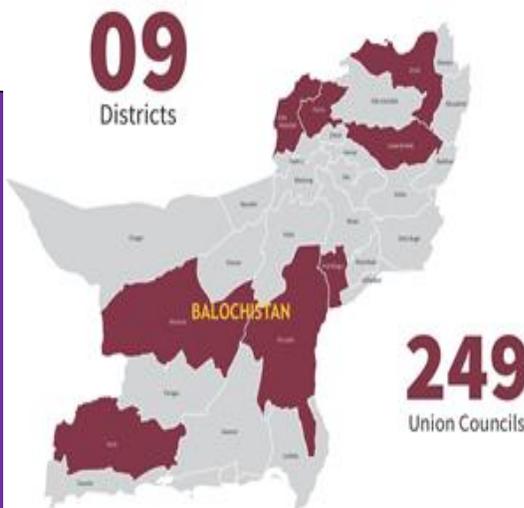


Asmat Kakar



## Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities For Rural Poor Children in Balochistan



### Context

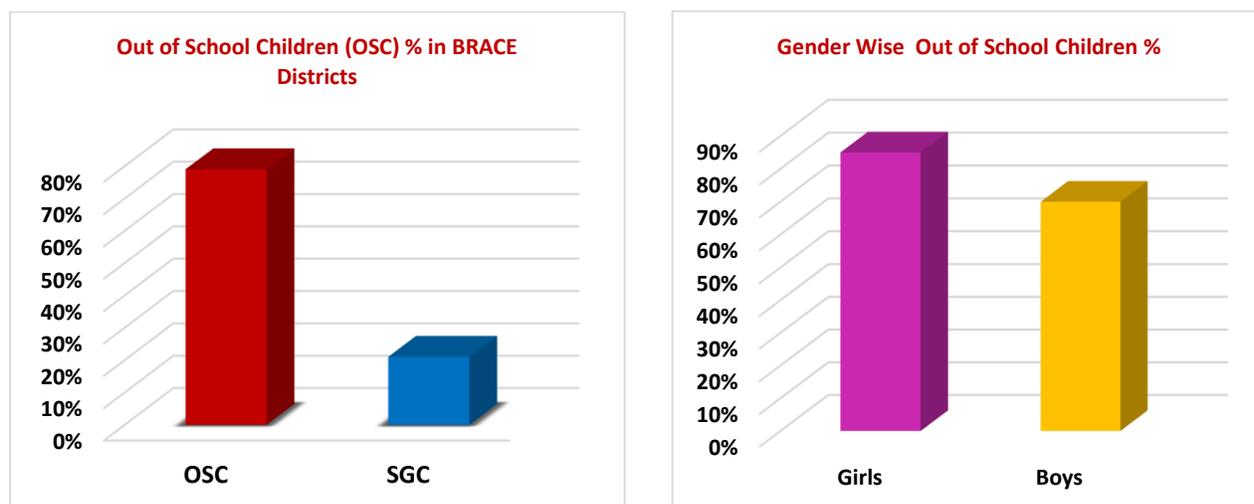
Education is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and inevitable for the success of all other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup>. However, Pakistan, particularly Balochistan province is lagging behind in all indicators related to education. A recently held census in 249 rural Union Councils of nine districts of the province under Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment (BRACE) Programme shows a very miserable condition of the state of education in the province. According to the census, 79% children aged between (5-16) in rural areas of the eight districts are out of school. Gender wise comparison shows more girls approximately 85% out of school in the districts. According to Pakistan Education Statistics 2016-2017 report 70% children are out of school in Balochistan<sup>2</sup>. Alif Ailaan (2018) report reveals

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of SDG 4

<sup>2</sup> NEMIS (2017), Pakistan Education Statistics 2016-2017

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about abysmal situation of education in the province and termed children in the province as ‘the most abandoned’ of all children in the country<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, according to Academy for Educational Planning and Management (AEPAM) (2017) report, 75% girls and 65% boys aged between (5-16) are out of school in Balochistan<sup>4</sup>.



This alarming situation of education in rural areas of the province requires immediate and robust measures from government and community institutions to ensure inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for rural poor children in the province.

### Understanding the Barriers to Education

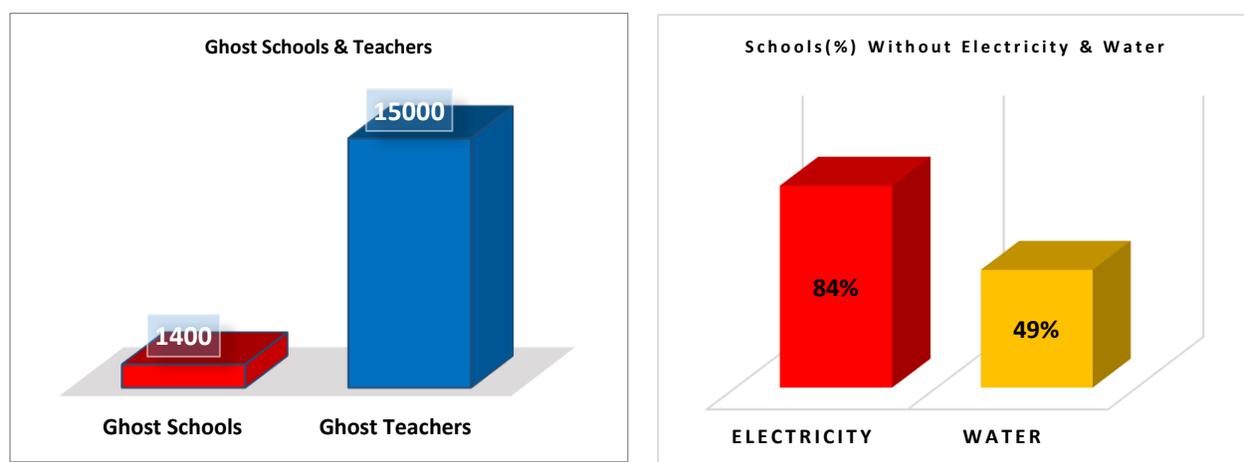
There are several reasons behind this huge and alarming percentage of out of school children in the rural areas of the province. Most importantly, after the decentralisation reforms under 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, the provincial government hasn't taken any obvious steps towards transfer of powers and resources related to education to the local governments, and implementation of Article 25-A for ensuring compulsory quality education for children aged between (5-16). The high number of ghost schools, teachers, and shelter-less schools

<sup>3</sup> Alif Ailaan (2018), Balochistan, Five Years of Education Reforms Wins, losses and challenges for the future

<sup>4</sup> AEPAM (2017), Pakistan Education Statistics,

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is another barrier responsible for high percentage of out of school children. Approximately, according to provincial education department statistics, there are 1,400 ghost schools, 15,000 ghost teachers, and 2000 shelter-less schools in the province. Moreover, lack of facilities like electricity, furniture, clean drinking water, and latrines are major barriers. With reference to a high percentage of girls out of school, social, cultural and social norms are also affecting girls to remain out of schools.



### Policy Recommendations

#### 1. Finance

- Provincial government should increase education allocation as well as spending in provincial budget particularly for rural areas where most of the children aged between (5-16) are out of school.
- After 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, education is a provincial subject matter. Therefore, the provincial government should transfer powers and resources further downward to local governments so that local representatives better utilize funds for improvements in education.

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## 2. Access to Education

- The number of schools should be increased during the five years' development plans so that maximum number of out of school children can get easy access to education
- Community run schools should be established in rural areas where there is dearth of well-qualified teachers
- Provincial government should develop a coordinated mechanism with support of local governments and communities to ensure implementation of Article 25-A of the 1973 Constitution.
- Special measures should be taken and implemented to ensure accessibility of education to persons with special needs.

## 3. Quality of Education

- Provincial government should hire well-qualified teachers who should have at least completed F.A with good grades.
- Robust teacher education programme should be designed to promote quality teaching in classrooms.
- Provincial government should provide special incentives to teachers to motivate them to work in far-flung rural areas.
- Mother tongue schooling should be started and implemented particularly at early stages of schooling
- A robust monitoring mechanism should be developed to monitor the attendance of teachers particularly in rural areas
- Capacities of examination department should be enhanced to better conduct learning assessments that reflect global and national priorities

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- Provincial government should develop a mechanism which must ensure that assessment results are used to improve teaching practices, curriculum, and learning outcomes.

## 4. Gender Sensitive Education

- Curriculum should be gender sensitive and must include gender discrimination and violence, reproductive health and sexuality teaching
- Policy should be formed to encourage and give special preference to female teachers
- Government should start conditional cash transfer programme for the poorest households in the province with condition for sending children to schools particularly girls.

## 5. Local Partnership for Education

- BRACE Programme data will be shared with community institutions who will then create synergies with local governments and education departments at UC, Tehsil, District and Province level for mobilisation of resources and advocacy for enrolling children in schools. Therefore, government should fully support and cooperate with communities.
- Government of Balochistan, with collaboration, coordination and cooperation of community institutions, needs to capitalize on the interventions of BRACE Programme particularly social mobilization of poorest communities in rural areas, by providing robust support to community institutions so that all targets related to education are achieved by 2030.
- Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has already established partnership with community institutions for enrolment of 1.6 million out of school children in the province, so similar kind of partnership should be initiated by the provincial government too.