

EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG WOMEN IN PUNJAB



POLICY BRIEF

PUNJAB COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Introduction

The social and economic freedom and empowerment of women (specifically young women) is central to the growth of economy and progress and prosperity of nations as envisioned in global agenda for inclusive development articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 5 "*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*", emphasizes the elimination of all forms of violence against women/girls,¹ ensuring economic and social participation of women, and securing sexual and reproductive rights of women/girls. The total female population of Pakistan is 49% (**106 million**) of the total population.² Pakistan has a young population, estimated at 29% of total population for the age group 15-29 years, half of which are women. This youth demographic is generally seen as a dividend, accelerating economic growth and prosperity of the country, provided there is provision of quality education and skills, employment and space for engagement and participation in civic life and decision-making for youth without any discrimination based on gender.³

This policy brief builds upon the three levers of change identified by the UNDP Report on Unleashing the Potential of a Young Pakistan, i.e. quality education, decent employment and meaningful engagement. It uses a gender lens to augment these levers with a critical and important facet that women encounter during their life cycle i.e. violence and restrictions on mobility, on making decisions for themselves and control of resources. For women, and young women in particular, a violence free environment, in which they can count on the support of family and community (*particularly men*), can be a major driver of change that allows them to exercise their constitutional rights and pursue education and economic opportunities.⁴

Key Messages

- ▶ 47% of young women (ages 15-24) are currently not in education, employment or training (NEET rate).
- ▶ Early marriages and early motherhood (before age 18) restrict choices for women. Young married women increased experience spousal violence.
- ▶ Net enrollment for middle schools is half that of primary schools. This appears to be the critical point at which the life course changes: continued education or early marriage. Fewer girls drop out between middle and high school.
- ▶ 31% are in the labour force. But only one third are in paid employment.
- ▶ Only 56% of young women (18-29 years) have CNICs; 48% are registered voters and 69% voted in Elections 2018. Few women have computer literacy (34%) and access to the internet (21%). Only 4% have a bank account.
- ▶ Improved opportunities for education, employment, civic engagement, and access to ICT, are key to enhancing young women's potential and ability to exercise their rights.
- ▶ Freedom from violence through enhanced state prevention, protection, prosecution and redress mechanisms are needed. Mass media campaign should target changing young men's behavior

The Punjab Youth Policy (2012) also notes these as key areas for youth advancement, and ingredients outlined in the first policy document of its kind in Punjab's context that explicitly focus on youth. The Youth Policy identifies the key challenges to youth development, and proposes measures for addressing these and utilise the available opportunities to achieve maximum development gains for youth.⁵

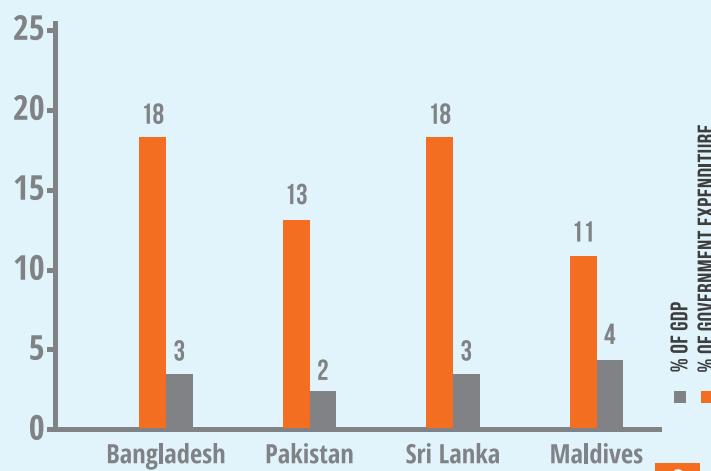
This brief thus discusses the following five levers of change for young women (*ages 15-29 years*) in Punjab: Education (*including access to information technology*), Employment, Engagement and Decision Making, ICT and Financial Inclusion, and Freedom from Gender Based Violence.

Data Source

Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), in collaboration with the Bureau of Statistics Punjab fielded a survey "Economic and Social Well-being of Women" (ESW), in all 36 districts of Punjab in 2018, to collect data from women aged 15-64 years.

The survey, designed to be representative at district level, collected data from approximately 32900 women in Punjab on their economic participation, education, health, decision-making and human rights. All figures cited in the brief are from the ESW survey unless otherwise stated.

FIG 1: GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES ON EDUCATION IN 2016



Young Women in Punjab- A Profile

Punjab has a population of 110 million, with 49% women (census 2017). Women 15-29 years are estimated to be 50% of their total age group. 42% of total respondents of the ESW Survey were in the age group of 15-29 years while the mean age of surveyed women is 33 years. Literacy is 69% for the young women 2018 (*compared to 80% for men*). It is higher for urban women at 86% than for rural women.⁶ 49% of young women (ages 15-29) are ever married in Punjab. 16% of women are married before age 18 and only 3% of young women are married before age of 15. With early marriages, motherhood comes early: 12% gave birth before age of 18. Young women also reported domestic violence: 19% of ever married young women reported physical spousal violence and 32% reported emotional spousal violence.

Education

Education is considered as basic right of women/girls and all member states of United Nations recognized and envisioned education in resolutions and conventions. The constitution of Pakistan also mandates free education for all children ages 5-16 through Article 25-A. However low budgetary allocations and investments in quality continue to mar the performance of the education sector. The government spending on education in selected⁷ South Asian countries (Fig.1) shows that Pakistan spends much less compared to its South Asian counterparts both in terms of percentage of GDP and of total government expenditures.⁷ Provincial allocations for education have increased over time but the bulk is for current expenditures (salaries of teachers and staff, administrative cost etc.) leaving little for development expenditures (Fig.2),

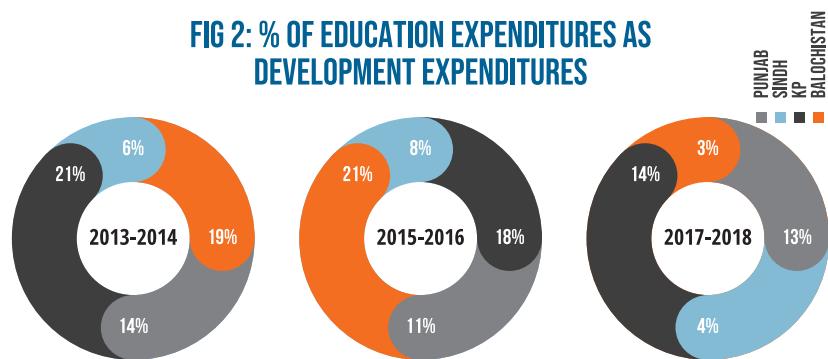
that have not increased substantially over time in Punjab and in other provinces.

Pakistan also lagged behind on the account of enrolment of children (specifically girls) in schools compared to selected south Asian countries. The net enrolment rates of Pakistan and other selected South Asian countries at primary and secondary level of education reveals that girls in Pakistan have lower secondary school enrolment compared to their peers in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan (Fig. 3).

The enrolment rates of girls/women (ages 6-15) are provided at various level of education (Fig. 4). Net enrolment after primary school in Punjab is almost halved and fewer girls enrol in middle school. This time coincides with girls attaining puberty, and restrictive gender norm can be one factor. Another is fewer middle and high schools for girls e.g. only 4622 middle schools compared to 16029 primary schools i.e. 29% of the number of primary schools.⁸

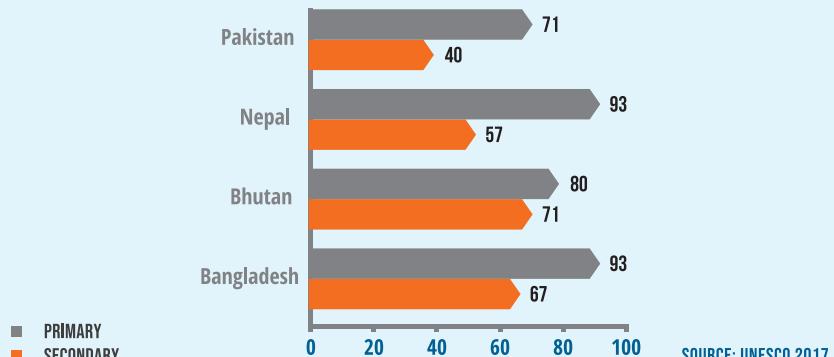
The ESW survey shows that about 9.5% of young women (ages 15-29) have attained a B.A degree and above (Table 1), of which 17% are urban, compared to 4.8% of their rural peers. The rural urban divide is quite stark with 42% of women having no education. 11% of economically active young women are unemployed and actively searching for a job (9% in rural areas and 14% in urban areas). Unemployment is higher for women with degrees (17%) than for those with no education (7%), pointing to the lack of jobs and opportunities in skilled or associate professions. The majority of employed young women in Punjab are concentrated in Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Fishing industry (59%), Manufacturing (22%), and Community, Social and Personal services (18%).

FIG 2: % OF EDUCATION EXPENDITURES AS DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES



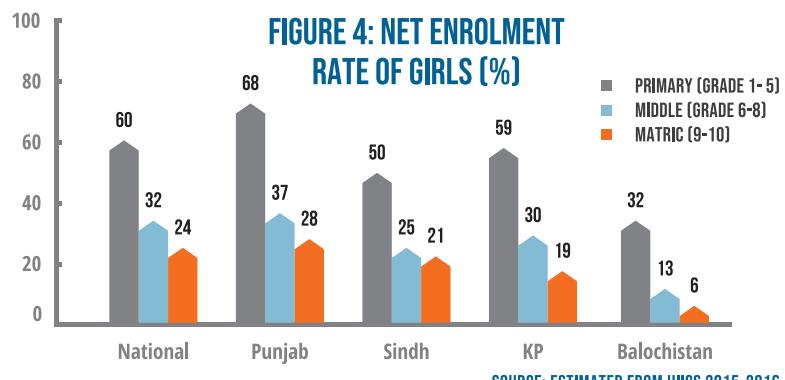
SOURCE: PAKISTAN ECONOMIC SURVEY 2017-18

FIGURE 3: NET ENROLMENT RATES IN 2016 (%)



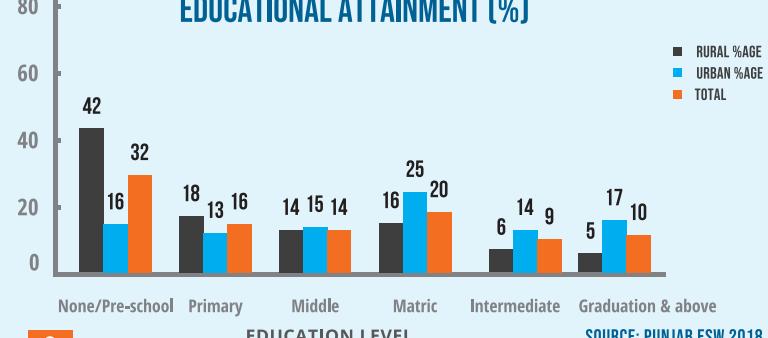
SOURCE: UNESCO 2017

FIGURE 4: NET ENROLMENT RATE OF GIRLS (%)



SOURCE: ESTIMATED FROM HIIKS 2015-2016

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (%)

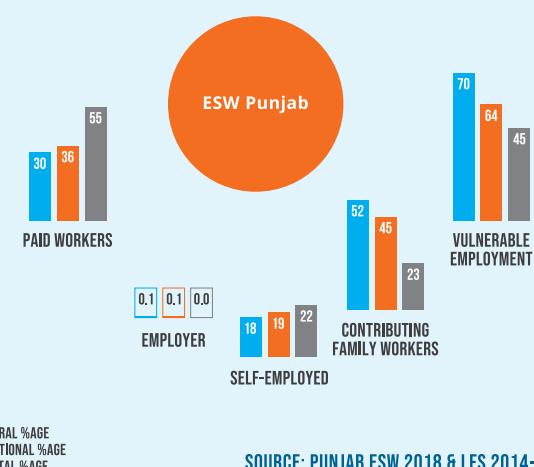


SOURCE: PUNJAB ESW 2018

Employment

There is a strong correlation between female labor force participation and economic development. The refined labour force participation rate of women (ages 15-29) years is 31% in Punjab (37% rural and 23% in urban). The last available labour force survey (2014-15) has similar figures (23% national, and 29% for Punjab). Only 36% of these women are in paid employment (Table 2). The intersection of education and employment shows that 35% of young women who have higher education are in the labour force, more so in rural areas (44%) than in urban (30%). Education in rural areas is a strong push factor for young women to participate in the labour market and women are likely to find employment in primary schooling in rural areas.

TABLE 2: TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG WOMEN (AGES 15-29)



Majority of women are employed in informal non-agriculture sector (76%) and only 24% are employed in formal sector (Table 3); informal employment is higher in rural Punjab (79%) compared to urban (73%).

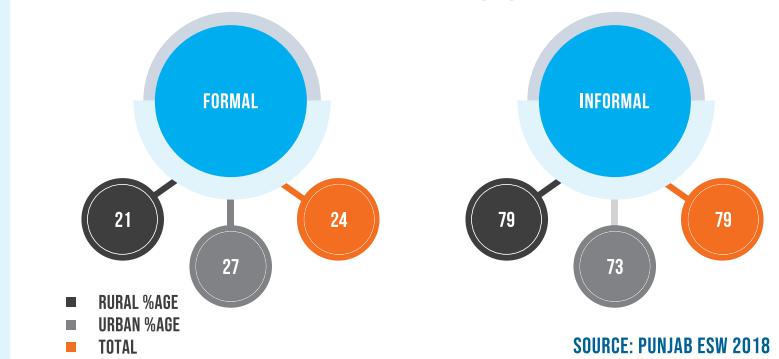
Women in general and young women in particular face barriers that restrict their economic mobility and work. Women feel their lack of qualifications, lack of appropriate job and

training opportunities, domestic work responsibilities, inadequate promotion opportunities, lack of transport and accommodation, family, and conduct of male colleagues are the major barriers (ESW Survey 2018). The intersection of education and employment shows that 35% of young women who have higher education are in the labour force, more so in rural areas (44%) than in urban (30%). Education in rural areas is a strong push factor for young women to participate in the labour market and women are likely to find employment in primary schooling in rural areas.

Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET)

While few women graduate from college, fewer still make it to the workforce. The population of young people (age 15-24) who are not participating in education, employment and training, are an important

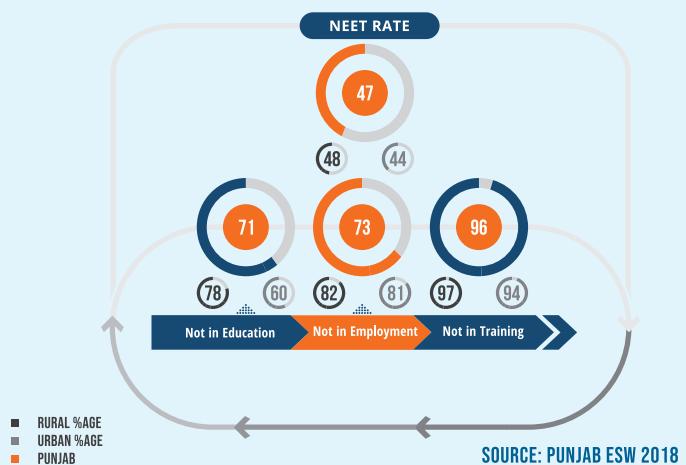
TABLE 3: FORMAL AND INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT (%)



indicator of the supply lag in the labour force. The NEET rate as it is called (Not in Education, Employment and Training) is quite high for women. Overall 71% of young women are not currently enrolled (not in education) in Punjab, 73% are not in employment while 96% are not in training. The NEET rate is 47%, slightly lower at 44% in urban areas.

Lower participation of women in all three areas is due to a number of reasons. Lack of financial means, domestic responsibilities, family restrictions, and marriage are the main reasons for not attending school (ESW Survey 2018). For young girls, the distance to school and lack of transport are significant barriers.

TABLE 4: YOUNG WOMEN (AGES 15-24) NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING (NEET)



Engagement

Engagement of youth in the economic, social and political arena provides them with access to resources, increases their visibility and open avenues for involvement in decision making fora. Quality education and decent employment help young women to make informed decisions and life choices, and contribute economically to the household. However, these are important not only for empowering young women as individuals but also in their political and social roles. There is scant gender disaggregated data available to assess the different dimensions of "engagement".

The ESW survey sheds some light on young women's self-reported participation in civic bodies, formal and informal institutions and as voters. The CNIC, issued by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), is an important document of citizenship that is required for any type of access to rights including education, employment, opening accounts in a bank etc. Fewer CNICs are issued to women in Punjab (41%) as compared to men (59%).⁹ In the ESW Survey, 77% of women age 18 years and above and only 56% of young women (ages 18-29 years) have CNICs; more urban women have CNICs (64%) compared to their rural peers (51%). Further 48% of young women (ages 18-29 years) are registered voters.

In general election 2018, 69% of all young women voted, compared to 32% in the elections of 2013. *Participation of women in community and social groups.* Reduced civic (58%) and political participation (69%) of young people has been noted during 2010-2015 (UNDP 2017). In Punjab only 39% of women ages (15-29) are aware of political parties and 1.9% are active members of these political parties (Table 5).

TABLE 5: PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY FORA BY YOUNG WOMEN (AGES 15-29)



SOURCE: ESTIMATED FROM ESW SURVEY 2018

In the ESW Survey, 77% of women age 18 years and above and only 56% of young women (ages 18-29 years) have CNICs; more urban women have CNICs (64%) compared to their rural peers (51%). Further 48% of young women (ages 18-29 years) are registered voters. In general election 2018, 69% of all young women voted, compared to 32% in the elections of 2013. *Participation of women in community and social groups.* Reduced civic (58%) and political participation (69%) of young people has been noted during 2010-2015 (UNDP 2017). In Punjab only 39% of women ages (15-29) are aware of political parties and 1.9% are active members of these political parties (Table 5).

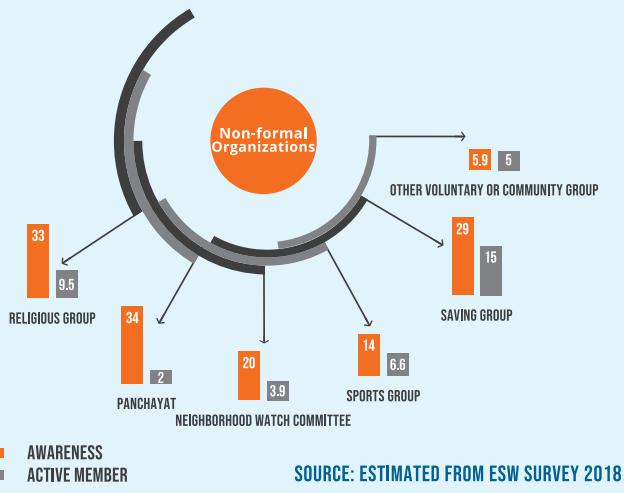
TABLE 5: PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY FORA BY YOUNG WOMEN (AGES 15-29)



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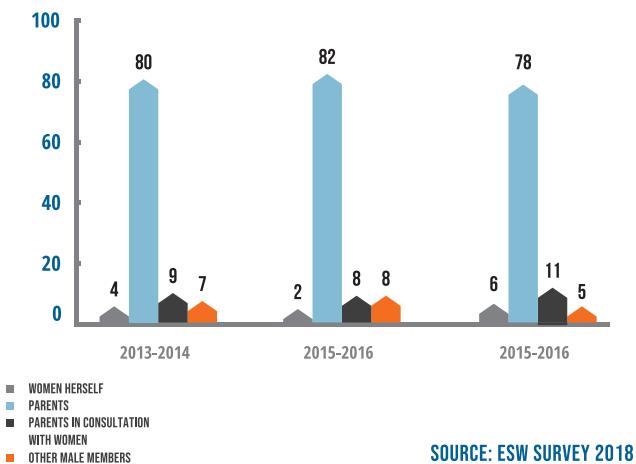
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Decision Making

Participation in decision-making processes empower young women and prepare them to take up civic roles.¹⁰ Enhanced access to economic resources and political participation has been noted in the poorest households of female cash recipients.¹¹ The confidence begins at home. However key life decisions in households are made by parents: e.g. 80% of parents make decisions about daughter's marriage; only 4% young women make the decision themselves (Fig. 5).

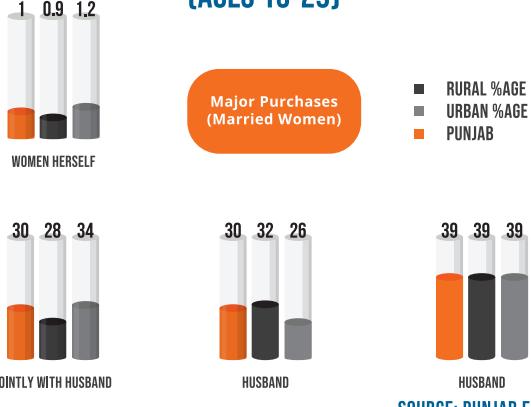
FIG. 5: % OF YOUNG WOMEN (AGES 15-29) BY DECISION ABOUT MARRIAGE



Women have greater say, jointly with husbands, in deciding about contraceptive use, a key

decision that enables women to plan their lives and avoid early or frequent childbearing: 85% in Punjab, slightly higher in urban areas (89%). Less than 3% of ever married young women make the decision themselves, and for 8% of women this decision is taken by the husband alone. Young women are also not involved in decision-making about major asset purchases in the home.

TABLE 6: DECISION MAKING BY YOUNG WOMEN (AGES 15-29)



Another important dimension of decision making is about major purchases in household, 1% married young women decide by herself about major purchases (*the percentage is almost same in case of unmarried young women as well*). 57% women do not need permission from anyone for work. Of the 69% of young women are not currently enrolled in education, almost half (31%) are not allowed by to attend the school by their family (or their in-laws).

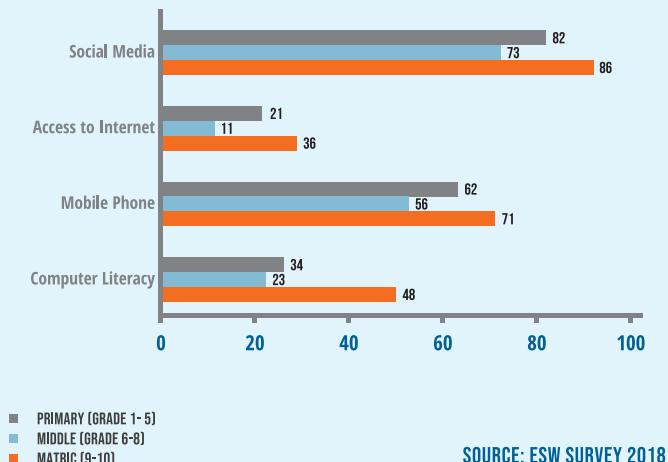
TABLE 6: DECISION MAKING BY YOUNG WOMEN (AGES 15-29)



Access to ICT and Financial Inclusion

Information and communication technologies have the potential to enhance inclusiveness and participation and lessen the gender divide as well as the rural urban disparities. 62% of young women are using cell phones in Punjab (71% urban) while 34% have computer literacy (Fig.6). 21% young women have access to internet and out these 82% participate in social media forums. About one third of women who use the internet or mobile phones require permission to do so.

FIGURE 6: % OF YOUNG WOMEN (AGED 15-29), HAVING ACCESS TO ICT IN PUNJAB



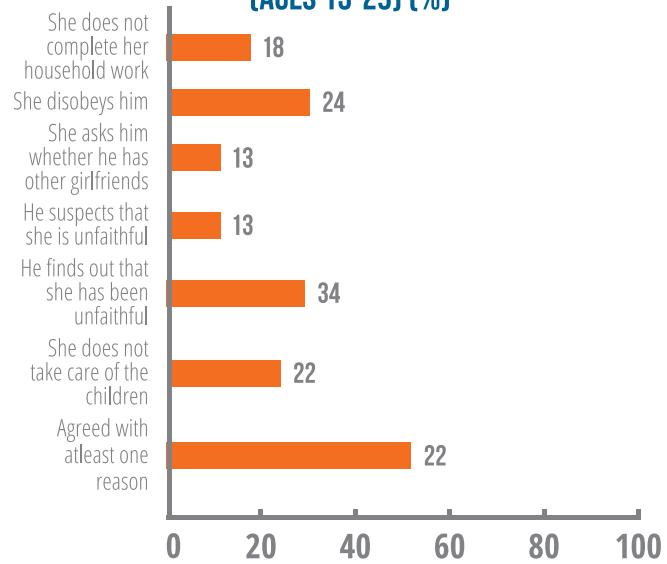
The use of ICT is closely connected to financial inclusion as mobile and branchless banking make their mark. Only 4.2% of young women have a bank account in their name, slightly higher in urban Punjab (7%). Only 6% have used mobilephones for financial transaction (easypaisa, jazz cash etc.). The percentage is also low (only 11%) for women who have a BA or above education.¹²

Freedom from Gender Based Violence (GBV)

GBV thrives in communities where there is a tolerance for violence against women, and discriminatory gender norms restrict women's access to resources and opportunities, promoting a culture

of aggressive and dominant masculinity. Attitudes toward violence statistics show that women have internalized violence by men as shown in figure 7 below.¹³

FIG. 7: ATTITUDE TOWARD VIOLENCE: RESPONSE FROM YOUNG WOMEN (AGES 15-29) (%)



Regression analysis suggests that age, educational attainment, and employment of women and husband are factors that make women less likely to experience domestic violence (*both physical and sexual violence*).

Recommendations

1. Youth policy must address the distinct needs of youth including issues faced by uneducated and rural youth, issues of transgender/differently-abled concerns of female youth and young minority women.
2. Provision of quality education based on a curriculum and pedagogy that imparts universal values and current knowledge. Civic and political concepts (democracy, human rights) and evidence-based knowledge should be embedded in the curriculum. Free education and skills development programs specifically designed to cater for the requirements of young women/girls are needed. Adult literacy campaigns should be designed to reach young women who are not literate.

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3.Employment opportunities, and access to information about those opportunities should be provided at high schools, colleges, and at public spaces in designated career counselling/employment support centres or venues where young women will be easily able to access them.

4.NADRA should actively seek to eliminate the gender gap in CNIC and voter registration through extensive outreach campaigns especially in high schools and colleges.

5.Enhance financial inclusion of young women by promoting products that are low cost and high value for young women, those with micro-enterprises, or for plain savings.

6.Better and safer (free of harassment) public transport and infrastructure provision can improve mobility and expand the set of choices available to young women for education and employment.

7.The government should seek to eliminate difficulties young women entrepreneurs have with regulatory frameworks such as the process of obtaining permits and licenses to operate businesses. Additionally, the procedures for compliance with the tax and labour laws and policies also need to be simplified to facilitate women entrepreneurs.

8.To encourage entrepreneurship amongst young women, government should establish mechanisms to provide business advice and support. Strong mentorship programs by female business owners and mainstream business associations will enable more young women to become entrepreneurs.

9.Rapid response mechanisms are needed to address cases of violence against women and girls. Mass media campaigns targeting male youth for behavior change to create an enabling environment for young women.

End Notes

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The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women is a Special Institution of the Women Development Department, Government of Punjab, established through the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2014 as an oversight body to ensure that laws, policies and programs of the Government of Punjab promote women's empowerment; that efforts are made for expansion of opportunities for socio-economic development of women, and discrimination against women in all forms is eliminated. PCSW provides periodic feedback and status updates on international instruments affecting women and girls. PCSW is represented in all 9 divisions of Punjab through its Members and Divisional Coordinators.

