

Inclusion of Persons Living with Disabilities in the Social, Cultural, Political and Institutional Arena of Pakistan A Qualitative Study



Conducted by
**Potohar Mental Health Association
(PMHA)**

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INCLUSION OF PERSONS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES IN THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL,
POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ARENA OF PAKISTAN
A QUALITATIVE STUDY



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all those who provided me the possibility to undertake and complete this report.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI), a Swiss charitable foundation within the Open Society Foundations, for their generous financial support to Potohar Mental Health Association (PMHA) in carrying out this study. I am especially indebted to Mr. Kamran Arif for his valuable guidance, support and endurance during the course of this study. Special thanks should also be given to Ms. Saba Gul Khattak, Country Director, Open Society Foundation (Pakistan) for sharing her treasure of information.

My heartfelt thanks to Respected Farhatullah Babar, Ms. Khawar Mumtaz, Mr. Harris Khaliq, Mr. Nordine Drici and Mr. Zafarullah Khan for writing valuable forewords. It is truly an honor!

This study would never have been possible without the support and cooperation of numerous individuals. My deepest thanks to the following people who facilitated PMHA across the country during data collection:

- Ms. Afshan Afridi, Chief Executive Officer, Collective Alliance for the Rights of Young Girls with Disabilities (CARY) Peshawar, Pakistan;
- Mr. Noor Quresh, Secretary General, Pakistan Association of the Blind (PAB), Peshawar, Pakistan;
- Mr. Sanallah, Director of Hope Special Education Academy, District Swat, Pakistan;
- Mr. Tajamal Hussain Danish, Board Member of Pak Power, Abbottabad, Pakistan;
- Ms. Ayesha Rehman, President, Disables Inclusive Association (DIA), Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Pakistan;
- Ms. Rozina Khaliq, President, Hasna Welfare and Development Organization, Rawalpindi, Pakistan;
- Ms. Shahida Abbasi; Principal, Government Girls Secondary School for Visually Impaired, Shamsabad, Rawalpindi, Pakistan;
- Ms. Shamsa Kanwal, Chairperson, Safia Foundation, Sialkot, Pakistan;
- Mr. Salman Khalid; Inclusion Expert, Lahore, Pakistan;
- Ms. Zahida Hameed Qureshi, Founder and President, Society for Special Persons (SSP), Multan, Pakistan;
- Mr. Abdul Qadoos, Divisional Director, Department of Empowerment of Person with Disabilities (DEPD), Sukkur, Pakistan;
- Mr. Danish Kalwar, Member National Youth Assembly; Sindh Chapter, Pakistan;
- Ms. Saira Lashari, Director, NDF Rehabilitation Centre, Nawabshah, Pakistan;
- Mr. Abid Lashari, President, National Disability & Development Forum (NDF), Nawabshah, Pakistan;
- Mr. Omair Ahmad, Executive Director, Network of Organizations Working with Persons with Disabilities (NOWPDP), Karachi, Pakistan;
- Mr. Muhammad Osama, Pakistani Sign Language Expert / Interpreter, Karachi, Pakistan;
- Mr. Naveed Ahmed, Local Language (Sindhi) Translator, Karachi, Pakistan;
- Ms. Fozia Luni, Executive Member, Breaking Barrier Women (BBW), Quetta, Pakistan;
- Ms. Zarghoona Wadood, Disability Rights Advocate, Quetta, Pakistan;



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- Ms. Shazia Batool, Artist, Presidential Award Winner, Quetta, Pakistan;
- Mr. Ghulam Dastagir, General Secretary, Pakistan Association of the Blind (PAB), Provincial Branch, Balochistan, Pakistan.

I am grateful to Mr. Muhammad Ismail Khan for his precious professional services as Co-Researcher and help me to assemble the parts and gave quality suggestions to enhance the data collection in the study. Special thanks should also be given to Ms. Asma Ghani for her valuable contribution as co-facilitator during the course of the study. My sincere appreciation to Misbah Bibi, Project Officer PMHA for her professionalism, zeal, commitment, compassion and most significantly sensitivity towards disability related issues throughout the study.

A special note of thanks should also be given to Mr. Sami ul Haq Ansari, Data Analyst, for providing statistical assistance and support to PMHA voluntarily in analyzing the quantitative data of the study. Acknowledgments are also due to Mr. Khadim Hussain, Researcher, Peace and Human Rights Activist, Mr. Amjad Nazeer, Executive Director, Institute of Development Research and Corresponding Capabilities (IDRAC) for providing valuable input and HI-RES printers for creative designing and printing of the report.

On behalf of PMHA and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to extend our immense and profound gratitude to each and every participant who took part in the study, shared his / her personal experience and provided candid insights and it is our commitment to them that PMHA will do its best to rise to meet this trust at all times.

I would be remiss if I do not specifically thank my two daughters Rawail Zulqurnain and Raveen Kulsoom Zulqurnain who kept me energized and motivated throughout the field trips and more so during the tough isolation of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and physical distancing.

Last but not the least, many thanks go to Farah Zulqurnain, Project Manager, who has invested her full effort in guiding the team and staying focused in achieving the goals. Furthermore, she also carried out the detailed visual insights into the research findings, helped me to complete various activities of the study, especially in writing this report.

This study is dedicated to all the persons living with disabilities of Pakistan



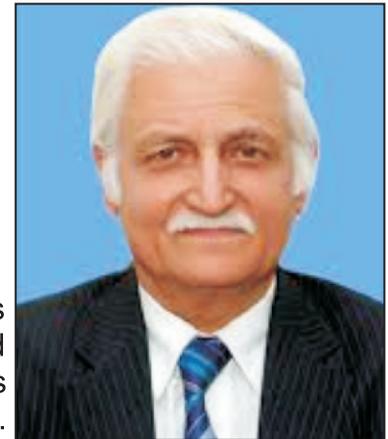
FOREWORD

Farhatullah Babar

Former Senator

Secretary-General

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)



I wish to compliment the Potohar Mental Health Association (PHMA), its Chief Executive Mr. Zulqurnain Asghar and his entire team of dedicated individuals for compiling a comprehensive report on the inclusion of persons living with disabilities in the social, cultural and political arenas of Pakistan. The report not only identifies the issues and challenges faced by the PWDs in various walks of life but also makes specific recommendations to various state authorities on how to address the issues.

Almost a decade ago Pakistan ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Having signed and ratified the Convention Pakistan is obligated to take legislative, administrative and all other measures for the inclusion of PWDs in the society to enable them to actively participate in the national life. The study is a reminder of the commitments made by Pakistan with the international community, to its own people and identifies the huge gaps that exist and how to bridge the yawning gap.

The report stresses the need for legislation and adoption of the Bill which could not be passed due to Covid-19. Now that the threat of Covid-19 is receding there is an urgent need to the adoption of the pending legislation at the earliest. The Parliament has been pursuing legislative agenda in other areas. There is no reason to defer the Bill on the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The report highlights some startling facts that have largely remained unnoticed. There is dearth of authentic data and the definitions and terminologies employed with respect to PWDs are also not consistent. Conservative estimates put the number of PWDs at 33 million but authentic data about the type of disabilities, geographical location and other related variants is not available in any single volume.

The report also makes another highly significant point about disabilities that have come to surface during the last two decades or so. It is the disabilities caused by internal conflicts and displacements particularly of women and children. Unfortunately we live in a state of denial. The landmines exploding every now and then in tribal districts and the displacements caused by internal migration are not even acknowledged let alone documented. This is an area that needs to be looked into more closely so that effective strategies can be made to tackle it.

The report acknowledges the provinces that have already passed laws for the PWDs during the last one year. It rightly calls it "a huge step" even as it identifies gaps and discrepancies in the laws promulgated. As the existing law already in the field is almost four decades old and is clearly outdated, any effort by the provinces to make new legislation must be viewed as a step forward.



I would like to suggest to the PMHA to make a comparative analysis of the laws made by the provinces to highlight where improvements can be made by any province.

The report needs to be widely disseminated so that the parliament, the federal and provincial governments, the bureaucracy, the philanthropists, the NGOs indeed every citizen is sensitized to the issues of PWDs and motivate them to make concerted efforts for their active participation in the national life. The report should also be sent to the UN and foreign missions in Pakistan to remind the international community of the need to help the developing countries in removing the barriers in meeting the Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) with the active participation of special persons.

The PMHA deserves to be applauded for doing what primarily is the responsibility of the state and its institutions. I wish the PMHA and Mr.Zulqurnain Asghar greater success in the days ahead in their endeavor aimed at inclusion of the PWDs in the national mainstream.

FOREWORD

Khawar Mumtaz

Former Chairperson
National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW)
Pakistan



Visible public discourse regarding persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) is a relatively recent occurrence and that too thanks largely to the sustained advocacy of organizations of persons with disabilities. Government of Pakistan signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) in September 2008 and ratified it in July 2011. Following the 18th Constitutional Amendment and devolution of powers to the provinces Sindh, Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan enacted laws to address the needs of persons with disabilities. The National Assembly passed the Islamabad Capital Territory Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2020 on 10th January 2020. Unfortunately due to the COVID 19 pandemic the law could not be taken up by the Senate within the stipulated period and lapsed.

While fair amount of headway has been made on the legislative front there is still no accurate count of the number of persons who have disabilities and the nature and degree of prevalent disabilities – information that is critical for designing and implementing support services and systems. Similarly there is not much documentation about the kind of challenges faced by PLWDs or their specific vulnerabilities. This Report fills a much needed gap of information regarding the social, cultural and economic hurdles that PLWDs have to confront from the time of their birth through different stages of their lives. From physical impediments to lack of acceptance at home, callousness of society and absence of facilitation have all been captured succinctly. The Report gives us insights of the lives of PLWDs and their heart wrenching experiences — some in their own words -- and provides valuable information about the differences in attitudes, myths and perspectives about PLWDs in different regions of Pakistan.

The case is made for the inclusion of PLWDs into the social, cultural, political and institutional mainstream, to recognize their capabilities, provide opportunities and take measures to enable and facilitate the channelization of their potential. For this, in addition to legislation, affirmative action with the government in the lead is necessary. The Report provides recommendations to key institutional actors who can do the needful to not leave PLWDs behind.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Zulqurnain Asghar and his team at Potohar Mental Health Association (PMHA) for the valuable research and Report to take forward the cause of PLWDs in Pakistan, and to wishing you success in your pursuit.

FOREWORD

Harris Khalique

Secretary-General

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)



We live in an increasingly radicalised society. Due to haphazard and coercive attempts made by the powers that be over decades to impose unity without recognising diversity of all types that exist in our country, and lacking respect for the variety found among individuals and opinions, more fractures and fissures have appeared. There is little tolerance for any kind of difference – ideological, material, political, social, religious or physical. Consequently, we see the consolidation of a social hierarchy marked by dispossession, depravity, disenfranchisement and marginalisation for large groups of citizens. However, there are degrees of this marginalisation and citizens at the bottom rung of this social hierarchy are kept deliberately invisible and unheard. Most PLWDs fall in this category. What they face is not mere neglect by the state but a wide spread prejudice in society.

In most cases, this ingrained discrimination begins with immediate family and community. In a country where material scarceness gets coupled with poverty of ideas, people who are different are not just seen as a liability but systematically discriminated against. PLWDs face challenges of enormous proportion in their simple quest to lead a normal life. Those among us who boast of being able bodied in traditional terms – as there are multiple views available to challenge this notion – make an attempt to keep PWDs out of any basic decisions that affect their own lives, leave alone including them in any larger decision making or policy formulation. Exceptions are there to prove the rule.

But here the optimist in me – who gets wavered sometimes by the shocking reality – raises its head and reminds me that all is not lost. All is never lost. There are organisations like Potohar Mental Health Association (PMHA) and others, gaining strength from its inner drive as well as from its supporters and sympathisers from all walks of life. Organisations and institutions like these are determined to make Pakistan a healthy society and a mature state with equal opportunities and citizenship rights for all.

This qualitative study in your hands '*Inclusion of Persons Living with Disabilities in the Social, Cultural, Political and Institutional Arena of Pakistan*' conducted by PMHA, and the whole effort led by its dynamic and insightful Chief Executive Zulqurnain Asghar, is both significant and timely. We get to hear the voices of not only those who face challenges but those who defied all the obstructions to work their way up. The study recognises the positive legislative developments even if they are insufficient when it comes to resolving the major issues we face in this matter. But the emphasis of the findings remains on the legal, economic, infrastructural, social and behavioral changes that the policy makers and other individuals need to bring about in order to remove the barriers that are so deeply entrenched.

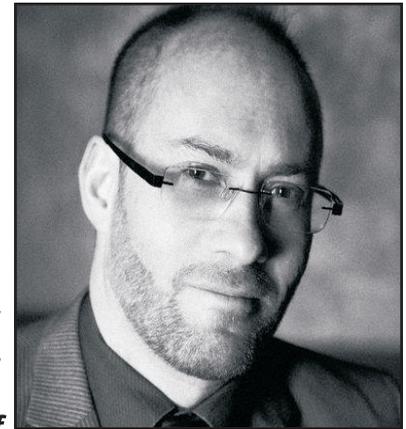
I congratulate Asghar and his team for not only raising the issue with such conviction but being recommendatory in their approach and providing evidence for the recommendations they make. It is sincerely hoped that the state takes this study seriously and ensures equal participation, inclusion, representation and opportunities for PLWDs.



FOREWORD

Mr. Nordine Drici

Human Rights & Rule of Law Expert
Chairman of NGO Planète Réfugiés-Droits de l'Homme
France



Hopelessness, lack of opportunities, fear, marginalization, harassment and abuse, depression, dire straits: these are key words and excerpts from testimonies of persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) in Pakistan, garnered in this unique and powerful study entitled '***Inclusion of Persons Living with Disabilities in the Social, Cultural, Political and Institutional Arena of Pakistan: A Qualitative Study***'. This study was carried out by Potohar Mental Health Association (PMHA). Through thorough research and advocacy, PMHA aims to understand the day-to-day challenges faced by persons living with disabilities in different parts of Pakistan, by deliberately focusing on the variations of these challenges in terms of their religious, social, cultural and ethnic background.

This study is based on thorough desk review and extensive field work in 13 districts across Pakistan, interviewing the persons living with disabilities as well as experts on the subject. First and foremost, I pay tribute to the persons living with disabilities interviewed, from all walks of life, and helps understand the daily struggle that PLWDs have to cope with in contemporary Pakistan on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural aspects of their life. The strength of this study is also to highlight the fact that there is still room for Pakistan to meet the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities and SDG 17 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, to be achieved by 2030 in an inclusive manner. And the clock is ticking fast.

Persons living with disabilities are not a curse of God. There is an upsurge need for a change of societal mind-set in order to erase attitudinal barriers. PLWDs should be considered as regular citizens despite their disability and should not be viewed from a charity point of view but rather as rights holders whose inclusion could genuinely foster a better society for all. Testimonies gathered in the study referred to so many missed opportunities for persons living with disabilities, owing to the lack of inclusion of disability in public policies, in particular for disabled women and disabled children.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities within social, political, economic and cultural public policies remains an opportunity paving the way to economic growth and development on the provincial and national level, as well as putting an end to the nexus disability-poverty in Pakistan. To achieve this challenging but necessary goal, all stakeholders (institutions, private sector, media and civil society organisations) should together prioritize the work on upholding a better access to information for PLWDs as far as fundamental rights are concerned, in order to put an end to exclusion of a segment of 33 million of PLWDs in Pakistan.

Pakistan signed the 2006 United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities on 25th September 2008 and ratified it on 5th July 2011. Pakistani authorities, across the board, need to make those legal provisions in the reality for persons living with disabilities in the country. Social and societal stigma towards PLWDs is still very strong in Pakistan but persons living with disabilities could



eventually become the torchbearers of inclusion and the architects of a more inclusive and disabled-friendly society in Pakistan.

This excellent and human-oriented study strove to demonstrate this assertion, by shedding light on the acumen of persons living with disabilities (PLWDs).



FOREWORD

Mr. Zafarullah Khan

Civic Educator

Former Executive Director

Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS)



Story telling is an effective way to communicate. However some stories are rarely told and narrated, therefore they remain unheard and often ignored. Potohar Mental Health Association (PMHA) has collected and collated many real life moving stories of deliberately marginalized '*persons with different abilities.*' The qualitative research conducted by the PMHA involves a sizable sample with wide geographical spread and offers many authentic accounts and insights regarding inclusion and '*exclusion*' of persons living with disabilities in Pakistan. This is a wake-up call for futuristic legislative leaps, prudent public policy reforms and more importantly for the much required change of mindset towards differently abled citizens.

The research conducted by employing methodology of Focus Group Discussions touches range of issues and imaginations ranging from identity, gender, societal biases, stereotypes, vulnerabilities, lived experiences, notion of accessible public spaces, service delivery, educational avenues and economic opportunities for the differently abled persons etc. Besides that it has generated good quality data to draw meaningful inferences and redefine our concepts, deepen our understandings and develop responses immersed in the notion of empathy instead of some charitable sympathy.

The timing of this publication coincides with a landmark judgment by a three member bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan (CP No. 140-L/2015) on 14th July 2020 that has ordered the federal and provincial governments to discontinue the usage of pejorative words that offend the dignity of person like disabled, physically handicapped and mentally retarded in official correspondence, directives, notifications and circulars etc. Interestingly the points flagged in this informative study have also been elaborated at length in this historic judgment. This can provide an impetus for long awaited reforms.

Pakistan signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2011. This obligates and binds Pakistan to privilege the rights based approach towards disability. The Supreme Court also emphasized that, '*Disabled persons by virtue of being a human have the right to enjoy life, liberty, equality, security and dignity.*' This calls for a rapid response to create an inclusive society. We need equity based affirmative actions for this segment of the society. This will enhance our humane credentials among the comity of the nations.

The research separately touches upon social, cultural, political and institutional arenas and offers a rich menu of reforms to all relevant stakeholders for corrective measures. Now the ball is in the other court and any inaction will disappoint the 33 million differently abled Pakistanis. I strongly believe these differently endowed citizens deserve a better deal.

I congratulate and appreciate Mr. Zulqurnain Asghar, Chief Executive of PMHA for steering this well researched and effectively argued study that will definitely enrich the existing debate and discussions on this important subject.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite some efforts to mainstream PLWDs, a lot needs to be done to ensure they get equal opportunities across the country. Governments should purposely include PLWDs in policy directions. The new infrastructure which successive governments are keen to build, whether housing societies or transportations should be accessible to PLWDs. The new curriculum government plans to roll out should have chapters on disability. More immediately, National Assembly should pass the ICT bill on persons living with disabilities, which hit snag due to Covid-19 pandemic.

These are some of the recommendations of the study conducted by PMHA. The study is based on interviews and discussions with PLWDs, officials, and civil society players in thirteen (13) districts covering four (4) provinces of the country.

It starts by noting there is no consistent data and terminology on PLWDs in Pakistan. Conservative estimates put it at 33 million, using generic formula of 15-20 percent of the population. Conflict and displacement in the last ten years alone may have increased that number. Definitional issues exist, as different statutes define them differently. When a PLWD apply for a job or even identity card, it is often up to the provider to qualify someone as PLWD.

The report lauded provincial governments for passing laws for PLWDs in last one year. This is a huge step, given that existing law otherwise dated back to 1981. But again, there are some discrepancies. Sindh's law in theory is the most comprehensive; others should follow suit. More so, the National Assembly should table the deferred bill now that Covid-19 pandemic is receding.

The report notes how PLWDs are vulnerable along different lines. There is a clearly a strong link with poverty. PLWDs are left on their own, not only in the society at large, but within families as investment in their education is not considered worthwhile. This must change. Women living with disabilities (WLWDs) face multiple discriminations, for being women and for being PLWD. Their mobility is greatly reduced.

Restrictions apply country-wide, showing how discrimination pervades in different parts of the country. Cultural excuses are given. PLWDs say them as incomplete human beings. That's how the society views them. Stigma is strong.

Yet there are positive elements in our tradition too. Popular shrines across the country serve as refuge to those abandoned by the society, including PLWDs.

Surely, many organizations are working for PLWDs and laws have been passed in recent times. But the discourse on PLWDs needs to be made part of society, as it has been with transgender community. The report called for sensitizing masses on PLWDs plight.



RECOMMENDATIONS

There are numerous answers to the glitches revealed through this study. Pakistan has signed and rectified UNCRPD therefore it is mandatory for government of Pakistan to do relevant and necessary legislation to include persons living with disabilities in the socio-cultural, political and institutional arena of Pakistan. Some of the recommendations are as follows:

To Parliamentarians and Legislators

- To constitutionalize the disability, Article 25-B of the Constitution needs to be amended and disability should be included to safeguard the rights of persons living with disabilities;
- Rights-based, necessary and relevant legislation should be passed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) to institutionalize the disability;
- Persons living with disabilities should be entitled to get all the facilities on one requirement; that should be having a special computerized national identity card (S-CNIC);
- Representation of persons living with disabilities should be ensured in Senate, National Assembly, provincial assemblies, local bodies (district level, town and union council level);
- Persons living with disabilities have all the required capabilities to emerge as a candidate or leader, therefore representation of PLWDs should be mandatory in Parliament through reserved seats and Election Act 2017 should be amended to ensure the inclusion of persons living with disabilities in the political process.

To Federal / Provincial Governments and Public / Private Sector

- The procedure of acquiring disability certificate should be made easy for persons living with disabilities so they can acquire special CNIC from NADRA without having any difficulties;
- Persons with prominent / visible impairment should be exempted from the requirement of having a disability certificate to get special computerized national identity card (S-CNIC); data of persons living with disabilities should be accurate and maintained;
- In public and private sector, employment quota proportionate to ratio of disability should be ensured and implemented;
- It is the responsibility of the state to provide employment opportunities to persons living with disabilities according to abilities, capabilities and population to safeguard their economic rights;
- Inclusive work environment should be mandatory in all public and private sectors including policies and documents in accessible formats for example accessible websites, screen reader for persons having visual impairment and sign interpreter for persons having hearing impairment;



- Social security, livelihood opportunities and monthly allowance should be given to persons living with disabilities in general and women living with disabilities specifically to improve their standard of life without being discriminated.

To Federal and Provincial Department of Education

- Education is a fundamental right of every child therefore, an inclusive, accessible and friendly education system should be mandatory for children living with disabilities; trained mental health professionals should be hired to identify children living with intellectual impairment and the degree of impairment for admission in public and private educational institutions;
- Admission forms should be made accessible to all, the procedure for providing competent and professional writer to persons having visual impairment should not be cumbersome; In addition, availability of sign interpreter for persons having hearing impairment should be mandatory in all the educational institutions;
- Choice to opt science subjects should be given to students having visual impairment across the country. (Pre-Medical, Pre-Engineering);
- Chapters on disability should be part of curriculum; syllabus in accessible formats should be available for children and youth living with disabilities (Braille, enlarged prints);
- Sign language should be taught as an independent language at university level;
- Students living with disabilities should be entitled to get fee relaxation in private schools, colleges and universities; facilities should be provided to students of rural areas to acquire higher education;
- Disability sensitization trainings for teachers and students should be carried out in educational institutions; professional carrier counselor and psychologist should be appointed to mitigate the academic and emotional problems of students.

To Election Commission of Pakistan

- Persons living with disabilities should be facilitated to cast the vote through inclusive and accessible voting process for example accessible voting education (Braille, enlarged prints for persons having visual impairment and sign interpreter for persons having hearing impairment);
- Polling stations and polling booths must be fully accessible which includes ramps, ballot boxes with adequate height for persons having physical impairment so that he / she can cast vote and signage should be installed in all polling booths for person(s) having hearing impairment;
- All forms should be available in accessible formats for voters and candidates having sensory impairments (Braille, enlarged print).



To State Bank of Pakistan

- Accessible banking including all the forms, policies in Braille and enlarged print format, availability of sign interpreter, accessible website, internet banking and opening company accounts for persons having sensory impairments without any condition should be mandatory;
- Persons living with disabilities should be eligible to get 10 percent of small business loans from banks without any condition;
- Installation of ramps on the entrance of all public, private banks and ATMs should be mandatory for persons having physical impairment;
- Teller, cash counter and ATM machines should have adequate heights for persons having physical impairment in all public and private banks.

To Pakistan Engineering Council

- Pakistan Engineering Council should ensure that Pakistan building code is updated, aligned with UNCRPD and implemented in its letter and spirit;
- Infrastructure should be accessible for all; adequate height of footpaths for persons having physical impairment, tactile walking services, alarm on zebra crossing for persons having visual impairment and signage for persons having hearing impairment, accessible washrooms and adequate width of rooms, doors and corridors should be mandatory to facilitate persons living with disabilities;
- Installation of ramps, tactile walking surfaces and signage in public/private sector, cultural, religious and recreational places including educational institutions, offices, courts, shopping malls, parks, restaurants, cinema, theaters, mosques, churches, temples, shrines and religious seminaries should be ensured for persons living with disabilities.

To Political Parties

- Disability wings should be formed in all political parties across the country and persons living with disabilities should have right to represent any political party;
- Persons living with disabilities in general and women living with disabilities in particular should be encouraged by national political parties to contest election and emerged as a leader to make the society inclusive;
- Election campaigns should be made accessible and inclusive including material of election campaigns in accessible formats (badges, flyers, and manifestos), corners meetings and rallies should be held on accessible venues.



To NGOs and DPOs

- Causes of disabilities should thoroughly be explored to mitigate and reduce the ratio of disability;
- Capacity building programmes for parents should be developed and executed;
- Disability sensitization trainings, workshops, seminars at public and private workplaces should be made possible;
- Awareness campaign through print and electronic media should be made in local languages and address the issues regarding stigma associated with disability, myths and facts about disabilities, causes of impairment, importance of inclusive education and right to reproductive health;
- Social support system for persons living with disabilities in general and women living with disabilities specifically including self-help groups, group counselling services and independent living programmes should be encouraged.



ACRONYMS

PLWDs	Persons Living with Disabilities
WLWDs	Women Living with Disabilities
CLWDs	Children Living with Disabilities
PI	Physical Impairment
VI	Visual Impairment
HI	Hearing Impairment
II	Intellectual Impairment
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
S-CNIC	Special Computerized National Identity Card
PCRDP	Provincial Council on Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons
UNCRPD	United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Child
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
FGD	Focus Group Discussion



OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Persons Living with Disabilities¹: Those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Disability²: Results from the interaction between persons living with impairments, attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Impairment: A long term physical, sensory or mental limitation person faces. It is exclusively missing of or the loss of functioning of a body part. The World Health Organization defines impairment³ as 'any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.

Culture⁴: The set of ideas, behaviors, attitudes, and traditions that exist within large groups of people (usually of a common religion, family, or something similar). These ideas, behaviors, traditions, etc. are passed on from one generation to the next and are typically resistant to change over time.

Social: Social⁵ organisms, including humans, live collectively in interacting populations. This interaction is considered social whether they are aware of it or not, and whether the interaction is voluntary or involuntary.

Ethnicity⁶: A category of people who identify with each other, usually on the basis of presumed similarities such as a common language, ancestry, history, society, culture, nation, religion, race or social treatment within their residing area.

Identity⁷: The qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person or group. One can regard the categorizing of identity as positive or as destructive. A psychological identity relates to self-image, self-esteem, and individuality.

¹"United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" 2007/
<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

²"United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" 2007/
<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

³"Difference between disability and impairment" Published on 14th April, 2017. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/difference-between-impairment-disability-developmental-delay-handicap.html>

⁴ "!!leydog/com" Last modified in 2015/
<https://www.alleydog.com/glossary/definition.php?term=Culture#:~:text=Culture%20is%20the%20set%20of,resistant%20to%20change%20over%20time.>

⁵ "Wikipedia" Last modified on 17 August, 2020/
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social>

⁶"Wikipedia" Last modified on 17 August, 2020.https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group

⁷"Wikipedia" last modified on 10 August, 2020/[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_\(social_science\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_(social_science))



Communication⁸: Languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology.

Language⁹: Spoken and signed languages and other forms of non-spoken languages.

Discrimination¹⁰: Any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation.

Reasonable Accommodation¹¹: Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Universal Design¹²: The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

Child¹³: Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Qualitative Research¹⁴: Multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

⁸"United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" 2007/
<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

⁹"United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities"
2007.<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

¹⁰"United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities"
2007.<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

¹¹"United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities"
2007.<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

¹²"United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" 2006,
<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

¹³"Convention on the Rights of child" !dopted on 2 September, 1990,
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx#:~:text=For%20the%20purposes%20of%20the,child%2C%20majority%20is%20attained%20earlier.>



Non-probability Sampling¹⁵: A sampling technique in which the researcher selects samples based on the subjective judgment of the researcher rather than random selection. It is a less stringent method. This sampling method depends heavily on the expertise of the researchers. It is carried out by observation, and researchers use it widely for qualitative research.

Purposive Sampling¹⁶: A non-probability sampling that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling.

Focus Group Discussion¹⁷: Gathering people from similar backgrounds or experiences together to discuss a specific topic of interest. It is a form of qualitative research where questions are asked about their perceptions attitudes, beliefs, opinion or ideas.

Demographic Sheet: Demographics¹⁸ are characteristics of a population. Characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, education, profession, occupation, income level, and marital status, are all typical examples of demographics that are used in Researches.

Framework Analysis: A qualitative method that is aptly suited for applied policy research. Framework analysis¹⁹ differs in that it is better adapted to research that has specific questions, a limited time frame, a pre-designed sample (e.g. professional participants) and a priori issues (e.g. organizational and integration issues) that need to be dealt with. The method has five distinct phases that are interlinked and form a methodical and rigorous framework. These phases enable researchers to understand and interpret data, and move from descriptive accounts to a conceptual explanation of what is happening from the data of participants in the study.

Contextual Analysis²⁰: A framework analysis of a text (in whatever medium, including multi-media) that helps us to assess that text within the context of its historical and cultural setting, but also in terms of its textuality – or the qualities that characterize the text as a text.

¹⁴“Qualitative and Quantitative research” Last modified on 2019, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html>

¹⁵“Non-Probability Sampling In Detail” Published on 30th April, 2018, <https://www.questionpro.com/blog/non-probability-sampling/>

¹⁶“Understanding purposive sampling” Last modified on 19th March, 2020, <https://www.thoughtco.com/purposive-sampling-3026727>

¹⁷Focus Group Discussion” Published on March, 2016,
https://www.herd.org.np/uploads/frontend/Publications/PublicationsAttachments1/1485497050-Focus%20Group%20Discussion_0.pdf

¹⁸“Snap surveys; why use Demographic Questions in Sheet?” Published on 12th March, 2012,
<https://www.snapsurveys.com/blog/demographics-questions-surveys/#:~:text=Demographics%20are%20characteristics%20of%20a,that%20are%20used%20in%20surveys.>

¹⁹“Qualitative Methodology for Applied Policy Research” 2009 , http://research.apc.org/images/a/ad/Framework_analysis.pdf

²⁰“Using Contextual Analysis to evaluate texts-” 2008,
<http://english.unl.edu/sbehrendt/StudyQuestions/ContextualAnalysis.html#:~:text=A%20contextual%20analysis%20is%20simply,the%20text%20as%20a%20text.>



Accessibility²¹: The degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible. Accessibility can be viewed as the “ability to access” and benefit from some system or entity.

Infrastructure²²: The basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads and power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise.

Social Inclusion²³: The process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, though. Enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights

Social Exclusion²⁴: A state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state.

Inclusive Education²⁵: When all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighborhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum (Bui, Quirk, Almazan, &Valenti, 2010; Alquraini& Gut, 2012).

Mainstreaming²⁶:The process of including the needs and wishes of minority groups in the planning or implementation of policies, plans and procedures.

Poverty: A state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a minimum standard of living. Poverty²⁷ means that the income level from employment is so low that basic human needs can't be met.

Stereotype²⁸: Any thought widely adopted about specific types of individuals or certain ways of behaving intended to represent the entire group of those individuals or behaviors as a whole. These thoughts or beliefs may or may not accurately reflect reality.

²¹“Accessibility defined” Published on 22 Jan, 2016, <https://myblindspot.org/mbs-accessibility-defined/#:~:text=Accessibility%20can%20be%20viewed%20as,the%20use%20of%20assistive%20technology>.

²²<https://www.lexico.com/definition/infrastructure>

²³“Identifying Social inclusion and exclusion” Published in 2016. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/chapter1.pdf>

²⁴“Identifying Social inclusion and exclusion” Published in 2016, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/chapter1.pdf>

²⁵“Inclusive Education” Published on 20th November, 2017. <https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/inclusive-education/>

²⁶“Macmillan Dictionary” 2018, <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/mainstreaming>

²⁷“Investopedia” Last updated on 8th November, 2019, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/poverty.asp>

²⁸“Wikipedia” Last updated on 17th August, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotype#:~:text=In%20social%20psychology%2C%20a%20stereotype%20is%20any%20thought%20widely%20adopted,may%20not%20accurately%20reflect%20reality>.



Stigma²⁹: When someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or actually is, a negative stereotype. Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people who have a mental health condition are common.

Barrier³⁰: Any condition that makes it difficult to make progress or to achieve an objective.

Attitude: A set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing, or event. Attitudes³¹ are often the result of experience or upbringing, and they can have a powerful influence over behavior.

Sexual Harassment³²: A type of harassment involving the use of explicit or implicit sexual overtones, including the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favors. Sexual harassment includes a range of actions from verbal transgressions to sexual abuse or assault.

Abuse: The improper usage or treatment of a thing, often to unfairly or improperly gain benefit. Abuse³³ can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, or other types of aggression.

Violence³⁴: The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development, or deprivation.

Self-Concept³⁵: Knowing oneself, accepting oneself with one's limitations, not being ashamed of the limitations but simply seeing them as part of the reality one is in, and perhaps as a boundary one is challenged to expand.

²⁹(Mental Health. Overcoming the Stigma's), 24th May, 2017, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/in-depth/mental-health/art-20046477#:~:text=Stigma%20is%20when%20someone%20views,mental%20health%20condition%20are%20common.>

³⁰"Definitions" Updated on 1ugust, 2020, <https://www.definitions.net/definition/barrier>

³¹"Attitudes and Behaviors in Psychology" Last Updated on 3rd May, 2020, <https://www.verywellmind.com/attitudes-how-they-form-change-shape-behavior-2795897>

³²"Wikipedia" Last updated on 22nd July, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_harassment#:~:text=Sexual%20harassment%20is%20a%20type,to%20sexual%20abuse%20or%20assault.

³³"Wikipedia" Last updated on 1ugust, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abuse>

³⁴"Violence prevention Alliance" Published on 21st November, 2011, <https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/#:~:text=%22the%20intentional%20use%20of%20physical,%20maldevelopment%20or%20deprivation.%22>

³⁵ "Disability and Identity" 2009 <https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/979/1173>



SECTION I

BACKGROUND

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world, with 227 million people. Of these, an estimated 33 million are persons living with disabilities (PLWDs). Persons living with disabilities face several challenges in their lives due to strongly prevailing myths and stereotypes. Women living with disabilities are fully dependent. A large number of PLWDs spend a miserable life in their native areas, many never seeing the outer world throughout their lives. Poor health conditions, inter-family marriages, environmental factors, natural catastrophes are also major contributing factors to exclude them from their fundamental rights.

Understanding the challenges of persons living with disabilities is not necessarily a challenge faced by a fringe segment. Estimates say one out of every seven individual is facing disability the world over. An overwhelming number of persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) live in developing countries like Pakistan. Understanding their challenges is to understand those of a significant segment of society. Therefore, the study explores why persons living with disabilities are rarely part of fiscal, socio-cultural, ethnic, public or policy discourse.

Most importantly, Pakistan is a diverse country, in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion, sects and languages. It cannot be said for certain as to which identity – ethnicity, region, religion, sect and gender – makes one more vulnerable than another. Different areas / region might have different realities. More so, the baseline assumption is a person's identity makes him / her vulnerable to mistreatment or care. A person living with disability might be discarded merely on the grounds of skewed religious or cultural interpretation. At the same time, he or she may receive extra care for the same reason. The mode of engagement may vary too: In southern Punjab, many persons living with disabilities visit shrines to feed themselves. These and other assumptions were tested in the study.

Add to this is the fact that Pakistan is also an unequal, multi-cultural and multi-nation society, where people have different levels of access merely on the basis of where they are born. Thus whereas, women have fewer opportunities than men in general, a rich woman in a well-off city of Punjab might have more opportunities than a Christian man in rundown city of Balochistan. To properly understand the vulnerabilities, one has to take into consideration the different identity dynamics. This is what this study aims to bring forward.

In addition to exploring the challenges faced by persons living with disabilities in the society, the study specifically looks at the ones faced by women living with disabilities. In particular, the study explores if women living with disabilities are subjected to more discrimination, violence, or not. PMHA believes that women living with disabilities are at triple-vulnerability matrix. It is quite likely they are ignored more than men living with disabilities, though the intensity of that was worth exploring during the course of the study. How do these women cope with, was also explored. Also, it was worth exploring the impact of gender-based violence on individual living with different disabilities.

The study also disentangled the link between poverty and exclusion. Poverty is at the heart of persons living with disabilities exclusion. They are denied services or not taken care of, by thinking they bring financial liability. The study explored the intensity of poverty in their exclusion, and what can be done to overcome that. While these are all important factors and documented in detail already, this study was



partly designed on the assumption that there might be diversity in challenges across the country, or at least the intensity of one sort of challenge could be different than others.

Mainstreaming Efforts

There are many organizations working on vulnerable / disenfranchised segments of the society. Their work has made significant contribution. Between 2008 and 2013, several pro-women laws were passed in the country, aimed at penalizing those harassing them, increasing their political participation, among others. As of now, efforts are made to mainstream the transgender community – they have been declared as the third gender in the country's national identity cards. All of these indicate movement in the positive direction. Such efforts however are minimal at the front of mainstreaming the persons living with disabilities to safeguard their fundamental rights. The study paves the way for the legislators, policy makers and influencers to understand how *Disability* is to be brought into that very discussion.

It was in 1980 that the United Nations declared the decade of Disability and since 1992, United Nation declared the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD). Pakistan too has been lately, marking this day. However, it was not until 2006 that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was drafted and opened for signatures. Luckily, for Pakistan, it signed the Convention on 25th September 2008 and ratified it on 5th July 2011. This essentially means that it is now obligatory for Pakistan to legislate for the rights of persons living with disabilities in the country. The study charts what the challenges are in terms of Pakistan not meeting all the requirements.

For much of the country's history, there was no specific law safeguarding the rights of the persons living with disabilities; at best, their rights can be sought under the fundamental rights of any citizens. One ordinance was moved in 1982 which was meant to provide the person living with disabilities with the right to employment opportunities. Although important, it has a few limitations. Given that it was an ordinance, it lacked the ethos of consensus required to pass any law. Most importantly, it dealt with employment opportunities of the persons living with disabilities that is providing them with a certain quota. There is much that the persons living with disabilities desire of – basic well-being and human dignity. Has anything been done towards the end?

In 2018, Lahore High Court (LHC) had expelled the practice of politically incorrect language for persons living with disabilities i.e. *blind (Andha)*, *hearing impaired (Goonga / Behra)* and *physically impaired (Langra)* in official matters and directed the government to make the essential modifications in the Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance of 1981; the decision emphasized the use of “*person centered language*”. Further, also recognized that “*discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of a person*”.

Sindh and Balochistan provinces have passed their own laws and Gilgit Baltistan has also adopted the law. After devolution of powers and the eighteenth constitutional amendment in 2010, persons living with disabilities is a provincial subject. Experts argue that so far, Sindh's law, Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018, is the most comprehensive in terms of safeguarding the rights of persons living with disabilities and it was interesting to find out that there was significant difference of the impact on different people's lives. More so, The Islamabad Capital Territory Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2020 was passed on 10th January 2020 by National Assembly of Pakistan unanimously, but unfortunately due to COVID-19 pandemic, Senate Committee on Human Rights was not able to



meet within the required three-month time period to pass the bill which led to the lapse of the act on 30th April 2020.

Potohar Mental Health Association (PMHA) aims to understand the day-to-day challenges faced by persons living with disabilities in different parts of Pakistan, by deliberately focusing on the variations of these challenges in terms of their religious, social, cultural and ethnic background. The study is based on thorough desk review and extensive field work in 13 districts across the country, interviewing the persons living with disabilities as well as experts on the subject.

Constitution of Pakistan (1973)

The Constitution of Pakistan (1973) guarantees the well-being of all citizens regardless of sex, caste, creed, ethnicity or any other basis but imperceptible about disability. However, Article 38 (d) states of “*providing basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all citizens, irrespective of any denominator along with those who are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of sickness, infirmity or unemployment*”.³⁶; provides protection to all citizen including persons living with disabilities (PLWDs).

Education: The well-known Article 25(A) of the Constitution provides “free and compulsory education to all children aged five to sixteen years in such a manner as may be determined by law.” Further, Article 37(B) requires the State to “*remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period*”, while Clause (C) of the Article 37 obliges the State of Pakistan to “make technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on merit”. These provisions in the Constitution of Pakistan are applied to every person regardless of gender, class, cast, creed, disability or any other denomination.

Employment: The Article 38 of the Constitution refers to the “*promotion of the social and economic well-being of the people*.” In the year 1998, the Government of Pakistan increased the job quota from 1% to 2% for PLWDs³⁷. Again, following the 18th Constitutional Amendment, respective provinces have, accordingly, legislated for PLWDs. For instance, Punjab increased the quota to 3%, while Sindh, and Balochistan to 5%.

Access to Justice: The Constitution indicate that “*The State shall ensure inexpensive and expeditious justice (Article 37b)*.” Its Article 10 and 10 (A) consider justice as a vital right of all citizen of the country including PLWDs. But, there is no explicit constitutional provision exists for PLWDs. Although, the preamble guarantees “*fundamental rights, including equality of status and opportunity before law*”. In this way, it can be said that constitutionally, PLWDs have been provided with equal access to justice and recognition before the law. However, the term ‘equality of status and opportunity before the law’ requires special attention because, it can only be guaranteed to PLWDs through special provisions.

³⁶ Brief on Protection and Promotion of PLWDs’ Rights, <http://mohr.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/briefDisability.pdf>

³⁷ Ibid.



Provincial Legislations: A ray of hope

The Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act 2018, introduced a paradigm shift in how disability is generally seeming in the country. Beginning from the medical and charity models³⁸, which was dismissed by the international community many years ago, to the contemporary social model that sees disability as a social construct of negative attitudes that separate PLWDs and establish systemic impediments that lead to further exclusion from society. Therefore, it follows a rights-based approach, emphasizing equality of opportunity, gender equality, and accessibility to ensure inclusion of PLWDs in all institutions and communities. The Article 32 of the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2018) also looks into the insurance of PLWDs in the province. Quite encouragingly, more or less similar provisions are also made into the Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act 2017; Article 27 takes on insurance of PLWDs in the province. It demands the Provincial Council on Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (PCRDP) to develop all-inclusive life medical and accidental insurance for PLWDs along with simplifying PLWDs in receiving such insurances. It also advises the Council to create a separate fund for PLWDs.

In terms of definition, The Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act 2018, appropriately includes all disabilities in detail for the first time in the history of Pakistan, signaling a major shift from the earlier federal and provincial laws that acknowledged only four categories i.e. physical, visual, intellectual and hearing impairment. The Sindh Act also incorporates autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD), dyspraxia, dyslexia, down syndrome, tourette, other syndromes and neurological disorders that majority of people, including several medical practitioners in Pakistan, are not aware of, or have rarely heard of.

The Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2018) bounds the government to provide measures such as easy access to medical services, provision of assistive aids, medicines and appliances and, health and medical insurance etc at subsidized rates in private sector, research on disability; and early detection and prevention of disability³⁹. Similarly, Article 11 of Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act 2017 deals with all matters connected to the health of persons with disabilities (PLWDs). It requires the Government of Balochistan to *“ensure barrier free access to necessary public health services in private and public institutions and infrastructure [sic] without any discrimination and without any cost borne by such persons [Article 11(1)].”*

The Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2018) also recognizes the right to education of PLWDs in the PartII, of Article 3. The Act defines inclusive education as *“a system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities”*. Besides that, Article 9 of the Act contemplates all matters in relation to education of the PLWDs. The Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017 especially respect education as the right of PLWDs. Its Article 9 takes on all concerns related to education of PLWDs. It ensures free education, equal rights and ample facilities at all levels for PLWDs in all public and private educational institutions. The Act further proposes at least 50% age relaxation to PLWDs in all public and private education institutions. It also earmarks special quota for PLWDs in educational institution for admission, and it proscribes

³⁸ Framing the disability debate, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/576114-framing-the-disability-debate>

³⁹ Alternative Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in line with the CRPD in Pakistan, http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/pakistan_final_report-final.docx



discrimination in admission in the purview of disability. Also with reference to special education, the Act anticipates establishing special education schools and other similar institutions. Besides that, the Act also safeguards inclusion as much as possible, and asserts for teachers training and ensures accessibility of education in any form i.e. online education, vocational training, distance learning and adult education of PLWDs.

The Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2018) takes on special actions for accessibility to essential services in multiple areas of life, for instance public health services, education and infrastructure. The Article 13 in this regard, pertains to the *'right to live independently in community'*. Further, clause 6 references access to facilities, transport and information. All public spaces i.e. footpaths, roads, schools, parks, roads, airports, railway stations and waterways need to be restructured and improved as per the Accessibility Code of Pakistan, 2006, to provide utmost accessibility to PLWDs. Similarly, schemes for new premises for community use i.e. banks, ATMs, shopping centers, government offices, theatres, cinemas and related vacation and employment-related sites shall be subject to compliance to the Accessibility Code, besides any other building codes prescribed at the time by the government. The law also provides for Signage and Braille codes to be initiated both by the government and private-sector institutions as a matter of course. Similarly, independent living of PLWDs has also been considered a right in The Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017; Article 12 in this regard, gives significant attention to *'independent living of PLWDs in the community'*. The Act compels the government to take needed measures to provide them access to houses, residential and other support services including necessary equipment, convenient technology for free or at subsidized rates.

Article 17 of the Sindh Act (2018) ensures right to political participation. The law states that the *"PLWDs shall have full right to participate in the political activities including exercising right of vote and right to be elected to an elected body"*. For that matter, the law requires the government to take necessary arrangements to ensure that voice of PLWDs is effectively heard in the elected houses at various levels. In addition, the Act demands that the *'Authority'* with the advice of the *'Council'* shall, with the help of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), educate political parties on the issues and problems of PLWDs to encourage them to make all relevant concerns part of their political programs. Similarly, the Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act⁴⁰ (2017) embeds similar provisions regarding giving right to PLWDs as incorporated in the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2018).

The Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act (2018) requires *"the government to ensure that PLWDs have unrestricted access to justice system including the courts of law, tribunals, police and other law enforcement agencies."* It also stipulates the cases of PLWDs to be dealt with priority. It further lays down the necessity of capacity building of all those involved in administration of justice. The law safeguards free legal aid to PLWDs and that it shall be the responsibility of presiding judicial officer to guarantee that the aid is provided to PLWDs. Balochistan Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017 makes similar provisions regarding access to justice to PLWDs as with the Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018.

⁴⁰<http://pabalochistan.gov.pk/pab/pab/tables/alldocuments/actdocx/2018-10-23%2011:12:48act-2-2017-disability.pdf>



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With respect to research, both of the provinces Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan states in their respective articles that no PLWDs shall be subject to any research without his/her willingness or informed consent or without any pressure and such research shall be through using accessible modern modes, means and formats of communication.

⁴¹<http://pabalochistan.gov.pk/pab/pab/tables/alldocuments/actdocx/2018-10-23%2011:12:48act-2-2017-disability.pdf>

“When you encounter some challenges, you start coming up with out of box ideas! Despite minor to major difficulties including inaccurate data of people living with disabilities of Pakistan (because of many flaws in the previous census, gaps in the process of getting special CNIC as NADRA have the record of 203,000 people living with disabilities and only 16 percent people have their special CNIC) and lack of funds, DPED is working to make the society more inclusive altogether in terms of care, accessibility, education, employment, rehabilitation, and sustainability. Sindh is the first province that has issued driving licenses to people living with hearing impairment. Inclusive education is a global discussion. In 2018, number of special schools were 50 and now we have 70 special schools. We are also trying to build the capacity of our teachers so that they will be able to assess the needs of children living with disabilities more accurately and will teach them in an accessible manner”.



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Disability and Poverty: Interconnected state of affairs

Empirical evidence shows that in last two decades the number of studies examine the linkages between disability and poverty in low and middle income countries has increased⁴². Disability and poverty correlate with each other and ultimately affect persons living with disabilities and their families; diversity, types, degrees of impairment, discrimination, lack of economic and employment opportunities, absence of legislative cover to safeguard the rights of persons living with disabilities are major contributing factors in the nexus of disability and poverty, therefore, from home to society, PLWDs are not eligible to participate in decision making process (personal or professional), to receive respect / dignity and to even fulfill their basics needs that further aggravate their exclusion and make living conditions more miserable for them. Financial constraints also barred them from fulfilling their biological, psychological, social and cultural needs.

“Employers don’t give us a chance to prove our abilities, they praise us in interviews, laud our courage and strength but when it comes to giving any equal opportunity they only give excuses. They throw us to the earth from the sky”.

Female participant having visual impairment, Islamabad.

Parents who can’t afford to give quality education to their children living with disabilities send them to madrassa that make them not only more vulnerable for exploitation and abuse but also limit their economic opportunities. PLWDs are not considered worthy of receiving their due share and deprived from the right to inheritance due to the preconceived notion that to give them any share is a wastage of resource.

“You are visually impaired, what would you do with the property or money? It is better for you to keep silent”.

Female participant having visual impairment, Karachi.

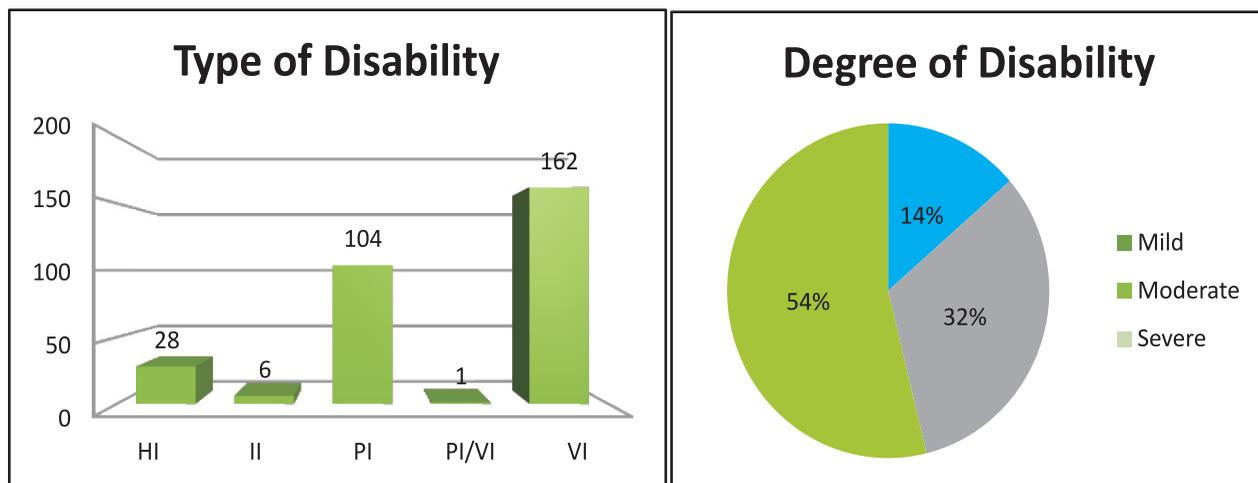
⁴²Groce N, Kembhavi G, Wirz S, Lang R, Trani J, Kett M. Poverty and Disability: A critical review of the literature in low and middle-income countries. London: Working Paper Series No. 16, Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre; 2011.

SECTION II

COUNTRYWIDE FINDINGS

The wide-ranging findings of the existing exclusionary practices, linkages between disability and poverty and occurrence of gender-based violence in the social, cultural, political and institutional arena of Pakistan articulated by participants are presented here. Each of the following sections provides revelation of the general situation of Pakistan when talking about persons living with disabilities:

1. Unfolding disability through social lens



In all thirteen districts, participants of the study narrated precise descriptions about disability (from a physical depiction to a person’s ability to accomplish his or her roles) and did not define disability in totality, for example: “absence of body limbs”, “people who cannot walk, see, speak or hear”, “those who could not work”, “people who cannot support themselves and family economically”, “people who cannot climb stairs”, and “people who can harm others”. Many participants stated that due to stigma associated with disability and negative attitudes of society are main limitations to move forward in life; they often perceived themselves incomplete human beings who cannot do anything in life which led to low self-esteem and lack of confidence to exercise their fundamental rights.

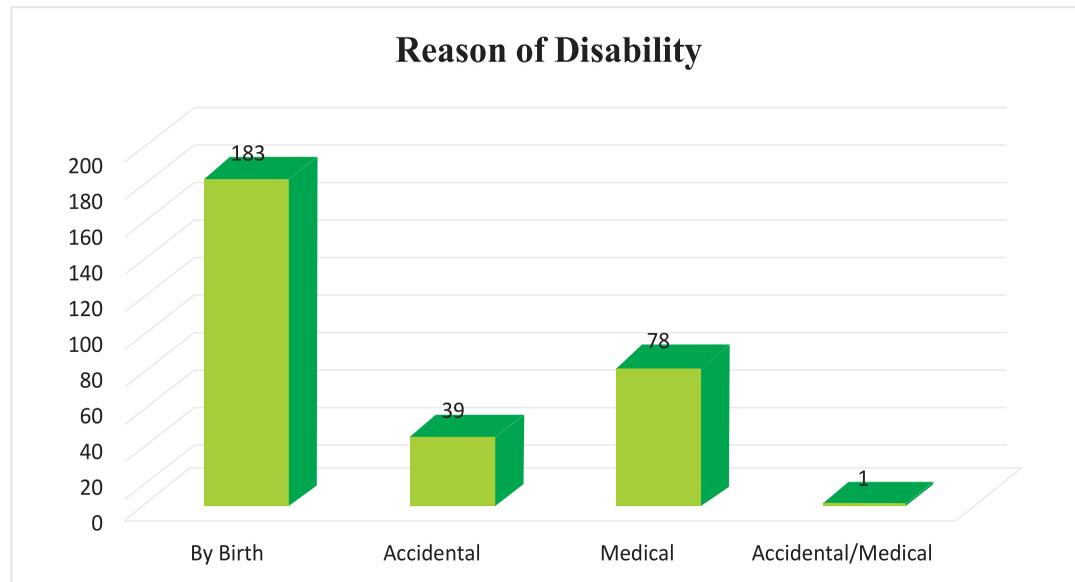
“We are five brothers; all are visually impaired. We have a large family to feed and to meet the household expenses, we all have to earn something. I am working as a dishwasher and did not ever received the decided amount from my employer. There is a grocery store in the main city from where we purchased the groceries every month. Sometimes, due to financial constraints I often used to get the basic grocery on loan with a promise to give the money within one week. One day the shopkeeper refused to give me grocery on loan basis by saying that he could not help me anymore because he came to know that we all brothers are having visual impairment and he is afraid that I cannot pay back the money in the future. On the basis of his doubts, he didn’t facilitate me and I was left with my hopelessness. This is not the first time, we come across these heart wrenching situations one after another day. Survival in this society is a never ending struggle!”

Male participant having visual impairment, Swat, Pakistan.

“A woman called during song break in my radio programme and asked me to write and share her poetry

with her name after the song break. I said that I will share her poetry in my next programme as I am a person living with visual impairment and I need assistance from the team to read your poetry. Instead of understanding my situation, she bluntly said that my parents must have done some sin, that's why I was born with visual impairment. I was heartbroken to hear such rude remarks in my live show."

Male participant having visual impairment, a successful RJ Sialkot, Pakistan



2. Birth of a child with disability: Attitudes and behaviors

Despite belonging to different cultural, ethnic, religious and sectarian background, overall responses of the participants across the thirteen (13) districts regarding birth of a child with disability were more or less similar. The birth of a child with disability (baby boy / baby girl / transgender) causes outcry at home, "a misfortune", "a curse", "a moment of unhappiness and shame" for parents. They got traumatized, the negative reactions and preconceived notion of extended family and society caused great distress for them.

"If there are eight (8) members in the family and one of them is having disability then it is considered a family of seven (7) even though they are counted eight (8)".

Female participant having visual impairment, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

"Take your child to a river, covered her body up to the neck-deep in the clay, she will be cured".

Female participant having physical impairment, Multan.

The reactions of family, extended family, friends and society as described by participants ranged from positive discrimination to extremely negative discrimination. Some participants specified that a child with disability usually viewed as "blessing of God" and "very near to God". Participants stated that due to some conservative societal customs, children living with disabilities are often seen as a source of getting forgiveness from God and for their prayers will to be heard and rewarded.



“Disability is a test of patience, those who are closer to God will always face the toughest situations”.

Female participant having visual impairment, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Many participants stated that due to misconceptions about disability and foremost desire to see persons with disabilities as eligible for charity instead of equality, society often perceived them as beggars and people wish to help them without realizing that their feelings can also get hurt.

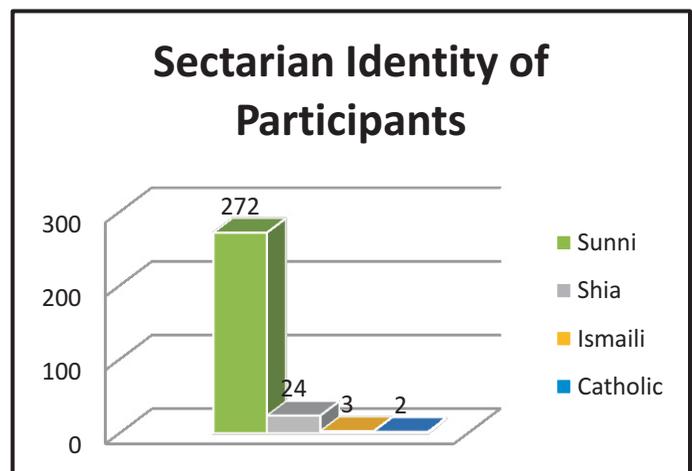
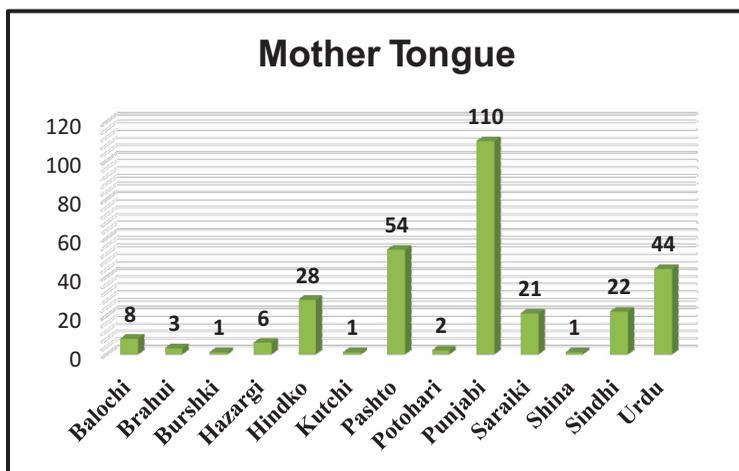
“When I went to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah, I have faced an embarrassing situation. We were seated near our camps when a Pakistani woman came to me and threw some money in my lap like I was beggar; I felt so humiliated, gave money back and told her that disability does not make us beggar. We are just differently abled people and that’s all. The pain I felt at that moment was unbearable. It is time to break these stereotypes and let persons living with disabilities to live as they want!”

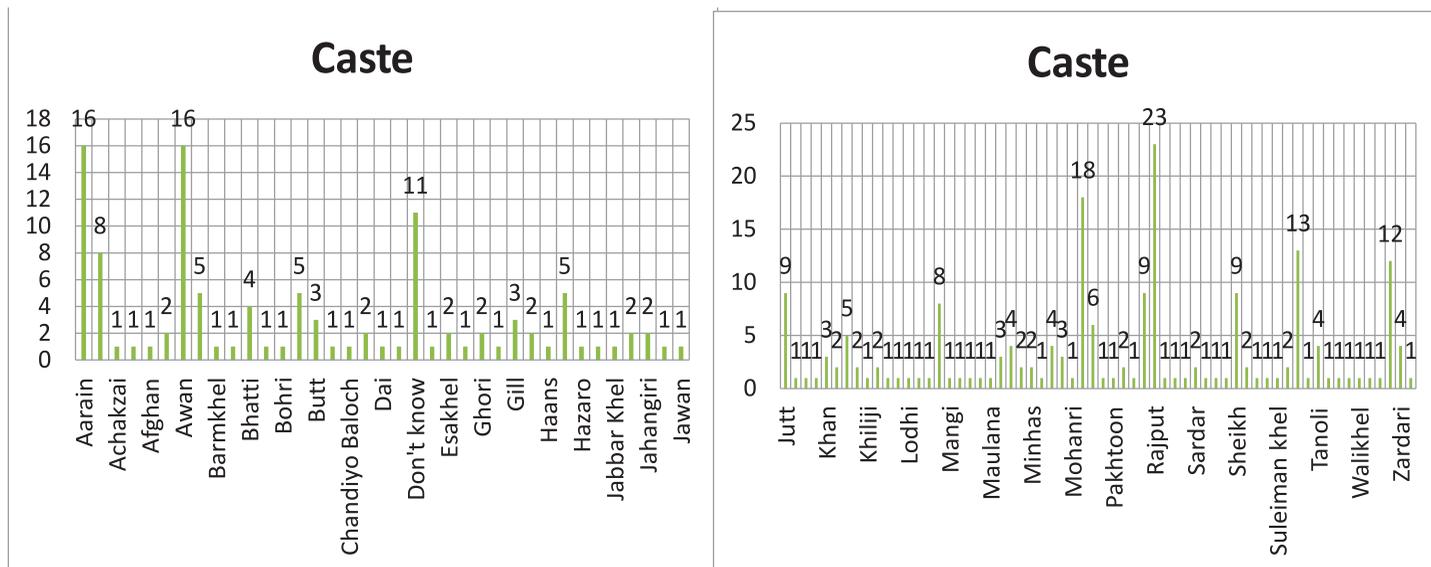
Female participant having visual impairment, Lahore, Pakistan.

Participants also stated that negative discrimination including lack of acceptance, dignity, respect, love, empathy towards a child born with disability is not a new normal. Extended family members, family friends, neighbors offered their sympathies to the child’s family.

A common finding of the study was *“punishment from God”*. Participants stated that the birth of a child with disability is usually considered to be a punishment from God for the sins committed by the parents in the past. A large number of participants spoke about how their parents were advised by different people to leave them at a shrine for treatment and should keep them separate from other family members till the end of treatment; a tradition not limited to one district or province of Pakistan. When it comes to the right to play, people did not allow their children living without disabilities to play with them, made fun of their disability and above all the contemptuous behavior of siblings forced them to become self-isolated.

Ethnic / linguistic, tribal and sectarian diversity of the participants across thirteen districts of Pakistan





3. Education of children and persons living with disabilities

Almost all the participants, across the thirteen (13) districts stated that they should have equal opportunities to acquire education without being discriminated / excluded on the basis of their disability but unfortunately discrimination at home and formal educational system stamped their exclusion. For instance, most of the parents believe that children living with disabilities would not be able to succeed considerably in life, therefore, it would be an overspending to pay school fees and on the other hand parents of children living without disabilities usually don't like the notion of sending their child to the same school as children living with disabilities attend.

When it comes to inclusive education system, many stated that inaccessible admission forms and inaccessible transportation also deprived them from getting education. Syllabus is not available in accessible formats such as Braille books/enlarged print and unavailability of sign language interpreters etc. Moreover, children living with disabilities are not allowed to study a few science subjects which is a discriminatory practice that prevails across the country.

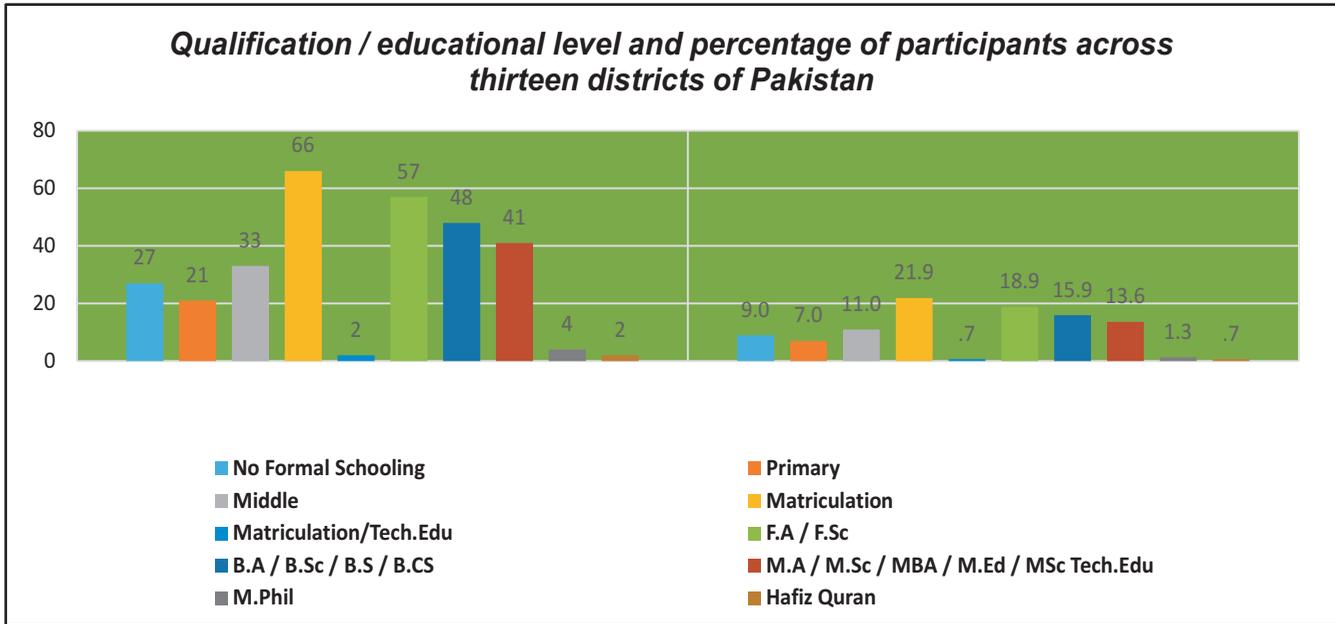
“I wanted to study Chemistry but due to my visual impairment I was not allowed to opt for a science subject. So I chose literature. Though I have learned a lot by studying literature but there is a void left in me. I still remember Chemistry formulas”.

Female participant having visual impairment, Islamabad, Pakistan.

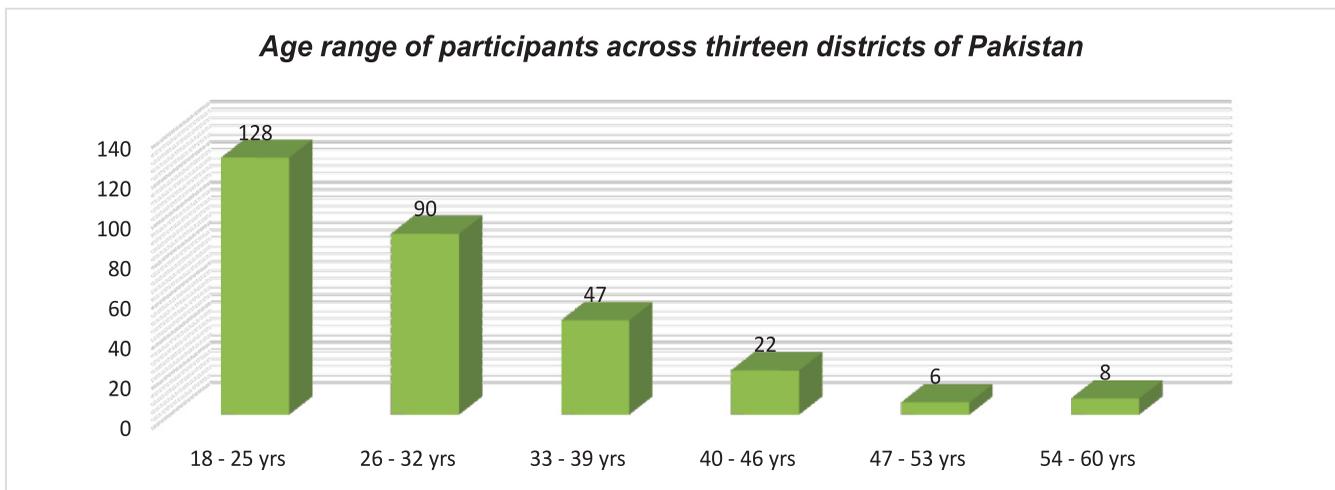
Some participants having visual and physical impairment spoke about the barriers including inaccessible transport system and discriminatory attitude / behavior of teachers towards them which limit their educational opportunities.

“My teacher once said, don't need to come to school. If you have travel issues then you should stay at home, why are you creating problems for your mother on daily basis?”

Female participant having physical impairment, Quetta, Pakistan.



4. Economic Opportunities: Capabilities, abilities and merit



All the participants particularly women living with disabilities spoke about the lack of equal employment opportunities for persons living with disabilities (PLWDs); prejudice and discrimination barred them from obtaining employment according to their capabilities and abilities. Many stated that 2% employment quota reserved for persons living with disabilities is not implemented and unfortunately persons living without disabilities are getting jobs on that quota.

“Swat is a district in Malakand division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In the past three years, 10,323 people were registered as persons living with disabilities. Most of the PLWDs in Swat are not financially stable and underprivileged citizens. There is a post in a Government office for person living with disabilities. It’s been more than 10 years that a person living without disability is working on that post. In such circumstances, people lose even little spark of hope that everything will get better one day. We went to the government office to discuss this issue but the respective officials refused to meet us because of our disability. Lack of economic and employment opportunities lead to poverty and instability!”

Male participant having visual impairment, Swat, Pakistan.

Participants also highlighted the fact that persons living with disabilities are usually seen as being entirely at the mercy of employers, faced discrimination and are practically never hired on merit basis.

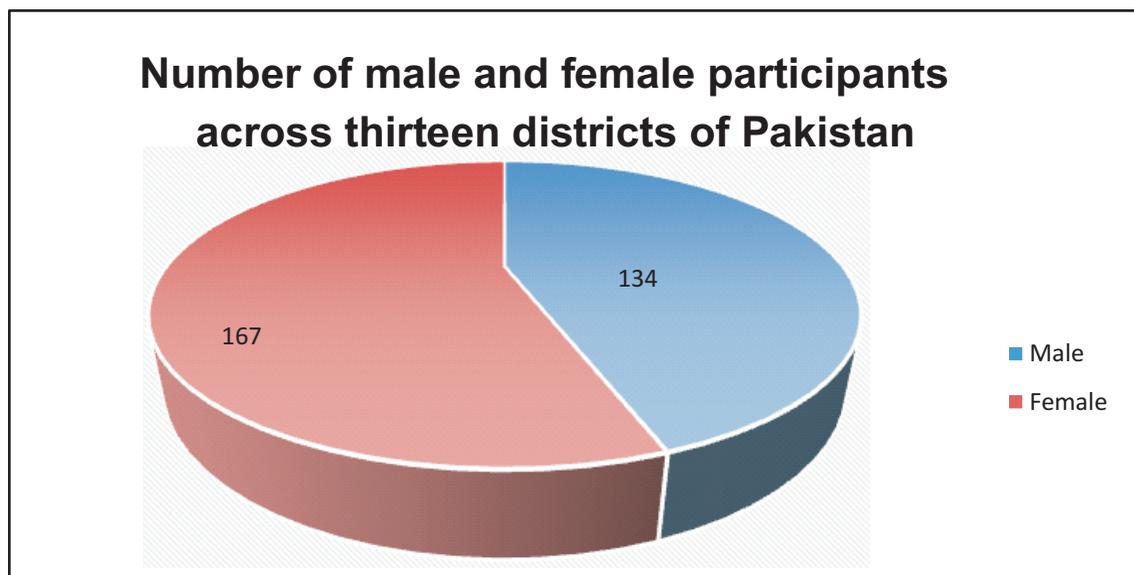
“After completion of my M.Phil in Gender Studies, I have tried to find a job for which I have applied in so many non-governmental organizations. I have got a call for an interview from a well-known international non-governmental organization. I thought this is the chance to prove myself. I have told them that I am a woman living with disability and will be using computer via JAWS (a screen-reader software for visually impaired) for written test, they said that there is no need to come for interview as they cannot facilitate a person living with disability. That day I got to know that even international organizations, who are working for human rights are inaccessible and exclusionary practices are not limited to national non-governmental organizations. Treating a person living with disability (man / woman) in this way is not professionalism!”

Female participant having visual impairment, Islamabad, Pakistan.

“In Pakistan, most of the persons living with disabilities are struggling to get a good job for which one has to face a lot of barriers in his / her path. To meet my expenses along with my studies, I had applied for the post of cashier at a famous fast food centre (PIZZA HUT) where I have got the job, but with the passage of time, they demoted me by assigning some kitchen tasks. Things got worse when they compelled me to do cleaning work / dish washing. I was badly hurt! There is a misconception in our society that persons living with disabilities can’t do their jobs properly and professionally. Unfortunately, people judge our capabilities on the basis of our disabilities!”

Male participant having visual impairment, Lahore, Pakistan.

5. Girls / Women living with Disabilities: Concealed, overlooked and elapsd



5.1 Birth of a girl child

In a developing country like Pakistan, birth of a girl child even without disability is commonly not welcomed by family / society and situation becomes worse if the girl child is born with a disability;

traditional customs and toxic stigma, compel parents usually to keep her hidden (simply deny her existence) or completely reject the reality that there is any kind of impairment. The serious lack of empathy towards a girl born with any kind of disability means that she has no right to live, of education marriage, reproductive health, inheritance and employment etc. In a patriarchal society like Pakistan a girl child having disability is not only hurt by society but first and foremost by her own family members.

“My mother once said to me that your father did not want a girl that’s why you were born with a disability”.

Female participant having physical impairment, Quetta, Pakistan.

“In my childhood I have heard someone said to my mother that it would be better if she had died right after her birth”.

Female participant having physical impairment, Sukkur, Pakistan

“I was in my clinic when a pregnant woman came with her mother in law for delivery, a weak baby girl was born with a disability. I have informed the family about the situation, her mother in law grieved and mourned about her bad luck and suggested that they should end the child’s life as soon as possible. I was shocked to hear such hateful remarks. She decided to end her own grandchild’s life just because she was born with a disability and her false belief that this girl child will be a disgrace to this society. I refused to take part on this crime and have tried to explain all the risks related to this unlawful act, they went home. After few days, I have heard that they didn’t take care of that girl child properly and she has passed away. This incident has left a mark on my heart. I never felt this hopelessness before about the fate of girls living with disabilities in Pakistan.”

Workplace experience of a female participant having physical impairment, Sukkur, Pakistan

5.2 Education: An unpaved way

Participants candidly shared their perspectives on education; access, opportunities, discrimination and rejection across the board.

“Due to cultural norms, girls / women living with disabilities have not access to public spaces, they are confined to their homes. Moreover, there are not enough institutions for girls and a lot of girls are deprived from their right to education”.

Male participant having visual impairment, Swat, Pakistan.

Having said this, if a girl / women living with disability has got the luck to complete her education, she has to face numerous challenges on her way.

“I used to go to school with my mother, there was no ramp in my school and classroom was on first floor, every day I had to request school guard to help me to get on the first floor. One day I mistakenly entered in staff room for which I immediately apologized but in return faced aggressive behavior, insulting and discouraging words from my teacher. At that very moment, I felt helpless, negative thoughts were running in my mind for example I am a trouble maker, I should quit, I am inferior, I cannot survive in this society”.

Female participant having physical impairment, Quetta, Pakistan.

and night and it became my passion. A week before the exams, I applied for the writer to accompany me through my tests. I started the process but I forgot how our system works. I had to travel all the way from Islamabad to Lahore for the procedure. It took a couple of days to complete the never ending process. Instead of studying, I was completing the process but somehow I managed to get through. Finally, I was relieved when they assigned a writer for me. Just when I thought this is the end of my sufferings, I came to know that, my writer doesn't even know how to draw proper margins on the paper. I came to know this surprising fact when I went for my first exam. The way I gave my test is another story. I lost all the motivation and confidence at very first day. I was frustrated that I have got an untrained writer after going through a painful procedure and this was not acceptable for me. I gave up and I did not attempt my remaining exams. A lot of our youth with disability cannot fulfill their dreams due to these types of exclusionary practices and experiences”.

Female participant having visual impairment, Islamabad, Pakistan.

5.3 Harassment at public and private places

Across the thirteen (13) districts, all the female participants highlighted that the world whether at home or outside is equally difficult for girls/ women living with disabilities, that is more challenging, frustrating and heart wrenching. Further, public and private spaces are telescoped for them, they face all kind of abuse, harassment and exploitation not only at home but also at public and private spaces including escorts and institutions established for girls / women living with disabilities. Some real life experiences shared by participants are as follows:

I went to a nearby park with my two friends also living with physical disability. We were sitting on a bench when two aged men came to us and started investigating about our disability and asked why we came in the park. We felt awkward, and wondered why the two strangers asking such personal and inappropriate questions, when one of them put his hand on my friends shoulder. I was shocked because they were old and were continuously calling us “Beyta”. My friend instantly jerked his hand off and assertively we both said to him that he should be ashamed of what he is doing. On this, they began to justify themselves by saying that how could we think that they were harassing us and we were like their daughters. We all knew that this is the pet sentence of every harasser. Almost every girl in this country faces such type of encounters in their life.”

Female participant having physical impairment, Islamabad, Pakistan.

“We cannot deny the fact that being a woman in such a male dominant society is not an easy task. I used to go to academy for the preparation of my final exams. I had to take a Rickshaw for this purpose. One afternoon, I took a Rickshaw and told driver the drop off location. After ten minutes, driver took a wrong turn. When I complained, he said he was taking a shortcut. He drove towards a deserted area and told me that he was picking someone else. I didn't know what to do as I was scared of his intentions. He tried to touch me inappropriately, also made some phone calls and I have got an idea of how to deal with this crisis situation. I said to him that we can meet on some other day. Initially, he did not believe but when I gave him my phone number (fake), he finally agreed and dropped me back to home. I have never shared the incident with my family because of the fear that they would have imposed restrictions on my mobility. The feeling of hopelessness and fear that I have experienced freeze my body whenever I think of that day”.

Female participant having visual impairment, Karachi, Pakistan.

5.4 Marriage

Girls / women living with disabilities have multiple constraints ranging from private to public places, culture to ethnicity and religion to sectarian identity, non-conducive and discriminatory atmospheres barred them from exercising their right to marriage.

“I broke the stigma, got love marriage with person living without disability but eventually society won the battle. The struggle started right after the marriage because I was not accepted by in-laws, experienced emotional and verbal abuse, heard derogatory remarks which caused great distress, my self-esteem and self-confidence shattered as unfortunately my husband “my love” also did not handle the pressure of his family and asked me to leave the house. Currently, I am living at my mothers’ home and meeting my own expenses.

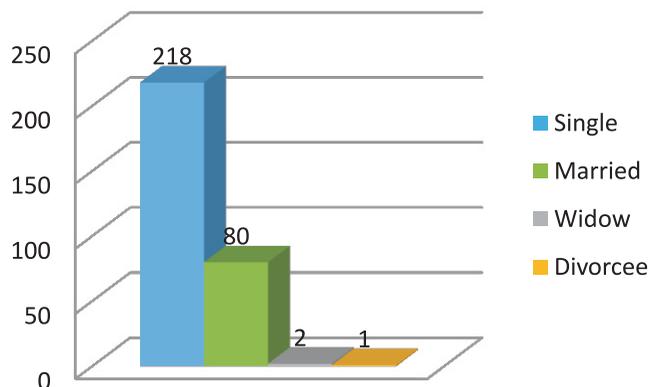
Female participant having physical impairment, Quetta, Pakistan.

“A woman living with a disability has to suffer a lot in our society. I thought my sufferings would end when I got a job, but, I was wrong. My husband turned out to be a selfish person, did not want to work and I had to meet all the expenses. Taking care of our children after work was also my responsibility. People around us pitied him because I am disabled but they never accepted that I was a working mother and running the household.

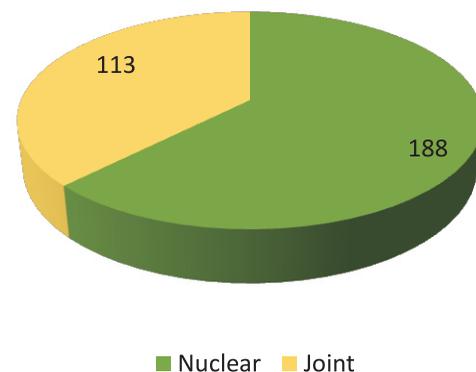
My husband doubted our relationship and blamed that I was engaged in extra marital relationship. He imposed restriction on me when he felt that he could not get control over me through mental and emotional torture. One day he took all of my money and left me in dire straits. I felt hopeless at that time because I have children to feed. Despite all the difficulties I was unable to take a bold decision to take divorce as society usually don’t accept a divorcee woman or children of divorced parents. Although, my husband came back to home once and apologized for his maltreatment with me, but I knew the actual reason, he spent all the money and he did not have any other choice except coming back to home. I clearly convey my message to him that I’ll not forgive him at any cost, but if he want to spend time with his children he can. My gut feeling was right, he left us again”.

Female participant having physical impairment, Sukkur, Pakistan.

Marital Status



Family System





“No one is born incomplete! There is an utter need to raise awareness and sensitization in this regard. We should accept the women living with disabilities as they are – there is a need to change the mind set of people and society only then we can make this society inclusive.”

Zahida Hameed Qureshi
Chairperson
Society for Special Persons
Multan, Pakistan



“Women and girls living with disabilities face attitudinal and environmental barriers. Lower socio-economic status further make them vulnerable to violence, abuse and discrimination. This hinders their participation on an equal basis with others. This is a major problem and prominent reason which need to be addressed.”

Zarghoona Wadood
Disability Rights Advocate
Quetta, Pakistan



6. Accessibility: Long way to go

All the participants indicated that due to inaccessible infrastructure, transport system, modes of communications, information and lack of assistive technologies persons living with disabilities don't have equal access to opportunities as compared to others which means a delimited atmosphere where unavailability of assistive technologies, sign interpreters, tactile walking services, alarm on zebra crossing, ramps, placement of signage and lack of many other means of support violate their right to mobility. Following are some quotes to illustrate all the above mentioned challenges:

“I find it very difficult to move around at public places for example most of the restaurants don't have trained staff to entertain person having any disability. They just leave a menu card and don't bother to notice that a person with visual impairment cannot read the menu card if it is not in Braille”.

Female participant having visual impairment, Quetta, Pakistan.

“I have to travel by bus to reach school with the support of my crutches, inaccessible buses made my travel so difficult and I often reached school late.”

Female participant having physical impairment, Quetta, Pakistan.

In our country, a hard nut to crack is the inaccessible transportation system which is not limited to any specific area. Every single citizen living with disability has to face this issue in their daily lives. I have also been facing this problem since childhood and still this is major restriction in commuting. Once I was travelling within the city, my uncle helped me to get into the bus and requested the conductor to facilitate me to reach my destination. The bus was inaccessible for persons living with disabilities and there was no concession in the fare as well. The bus was already overloaded and they were managing to get more people in it. In all this hassle, the conductor asked me to leave the bus even though my destination was still far away. I had confrontation with the conductor but he did not even listen and dropped me in the middle of nowhere”.

Male participant having physical impairment, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

“I was working in Social Welfare Department and wanted to make the department accessible but unfortunately, I could not contribute there because the directorate’s office had 25 to 30 stairs to reach the office”; as an disability activist. I faced a lot of challenges in terms of attitudinal barriers and fixed notion about disability, for instance, when I first time met a bureaucrat in a meeting related to persons living with disabilities, I was surprised to hear some inappropriate words; he said, Nizamani sahib why do you want to increase your work? I asked you made this law and how you will develop rules of business for this disability act? Some of the people became aggressive on my comment and some of them understood my point of view. There is a strong need of raising awareness for mainstreaming persons living with disabilities for which DEPD is trying to adopt an authentic approach; we have established an advisory committee of almost 62 people and arranged some meetings with the chairman to empower the advisory committee to eradicate the hurdles and address the issues of persons living with disabilities more efficiently.”



Ghulam Nabi Nizamani
Director DEPD
Govt. of Sindh, Pakistan



SECTION III

GEOGRAPHICAL FINDINGS

This section of the report comprises specific findings in thirteen (13) districts about stigma and myths related to disability, discrimination at home, judgmental attitudes and behaviors of society towards persons living with disabilities, accessibility trepidations economic obstacles, and challenges related to fiscal spaces, institutional barriers, access to education, employment obstructions and harassment disquiets.

ISLAMABAD CAPITAL TERRITORY (ICT)

In ICT, major concern revealed by participants was discriminatory attitude of bank staff and deprivation from internet banking or company account; inaccessible banks from entrance to counter for persons living with physical impairment; inaccessible ATM machines for persons living with visual and physical impairment; discouragement from private airline towards persons living with disabilities to travel without or even with an escort / attendant.

Once I went to a bank in Islamabad for some work but guard shouted at me, “tum faqeer ho jao yahan sey, tumahra yahan koe kaam nahi”.

Participant having visual impairment..

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA (KP)

Abbottabad

Parents prefer abortion if they got to know about disability of the child through ultrasound; as per advice of faith-healer, parents often set the child on fire to get rid of the reasons of his / her disability (*superficial powers etc*). Moreover, procedure to get assistive care devices is cumbersome, inaccessible infrastructure, unavailability of alarms at zebra crossings and tactile walking surfaces on roads for persons living with visual impairment limit their right to mobility.

Peshawar

In Peshawar, it was revealed by female participants that male cooks have been working in hostel of a government special school for girls living with disabilities which caused great distress and make them more vulnerable to abuse. Further, it is highlighted that women teachers living with disabilities don't get promotions; inaccessible transportation and use of private online taxi service or rickshaw increases their financial constraints; women teachers living with disabilities face accommodation problems, they don't get government quarters allocated for female teachers to live easily as compare to male teachers; women living with disabilities don't get assistance / help in public and private places due to strict / conservative socio-cultural norms.

“Our society is deeply fabricated and dyed in the wool. Once I was crossing a road on my way to school when a car hit me and the car driver ran away. I fell down badly and I remember it was not a normal injury. Everyone witnessed the accident but no one came to help me because first not only I was a second grade citizen but also a visually impaired woman so I was left alone in the middle of the road.



Still, I can't forget the feeling of helplessness. I managed to get up myself and have got medical assistance. I will never forget how people treated me on that day. No matter what the circumstances are, the society is still not ready to accept women living with disabilities".

Female participant having visual impairment

Swat

Participants stated that in Swat, most of the people believes that children living with disabilities are the result of parents' sins or wrongdoings; on the other extreme, some people think that God has bestowed His mercy on persons living with disabilities by giving them disabilities even if they face any trouble due to their disability. Also, 2% job quota for persons living with disabilities have not been implemented in Malakand division and they are deprived from right to employment.

"Persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) have an extra pulse that is why they are like that and because of an extra blood vein, they are naughty".

Male participant having visual impairment.

PUNJAB

Lahore

Majority of the participants highlighted the two extremes on part of parents: 1) lack of awareness about understanding disability and needs of children living with disabilities and 2) overprotective parenting decreases the opportunity to build self-esteem and self-confidence of persons living with disabilities; persons living with disabilities are eligible only for charity to avoid punishment and get reward from God; inaccessible transportation and unavailability of retrofitted vehicles make life more miserable for them in the heart of Pakistan – Lahore!

Multan

Most of the participants highlighted that immediate family members deny the right to life of girl / women living with disabilities; domestic violence and gender based discrimination caused great distress for girls / women living with disabilities and due to common superstitious practices, survival in this society is a big challenge.

"Faith-healer advised my parent that they should apply hot oil on my body to get rid of my impairment."

Female participant having physical impairment.

"If you pour hot oil in the ear of a person with hearing impairment, he/she will start listening".

Female participant having hearing impairment.



Rawalpindi

In Rawalpindi, most of the participants spoke about myths related to disability; people believe that to get married with a person living with disability (male / female) will definitely have negative impact on future generation; family members can contract disability from one another; disability prevent persons living with disabilities from sin (s); moon eclipse have negative impact on pregnant women and led to birth of a child with disability.

“God put you here for the right reasons, you deserve this disability. “(Tenu May-chech Rakhaya-ay)”.

Male participant having visual impairment.

“Birth of moon on wrong date helps the ghost to tight the circle around mother and as a result child (girl / boy) born with a disability”.

Female participant having physical impairment.

Further, it was highlighted by participants that persons living with disabilities are pious enough and are rewarded with heaven; women living with disabilities are deprived from the right to marry by family members which automatically leads to them being deprived from the right to inheritance; Building of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, an important source to facilitate and give assistance to persons living with disabilities is itself inaccessible.

Sialkot

Participants stated that people offer charity to persons living with disabilities and ask to observe fasting for them in Ramazan and persons living with disabilities face strict restrictions imposed by family and society and they cannot express their feelings and emotions.

SINDH

Hyderabad

Children living with intellectual impairment (girl / boy) tied with chains by parents; parents send their children with religious caravans to leaves their child (girl / boy) in shrines and believes on the proverb that *“In a difficult situation when our life is saved, that is equivalent to having gained millions (in monetary worth)”*; inaccessible mosques limit persons living with disabilities to exercise their religious right.

“In mosques ablution places are above the ground and inappropriately constructed”.

Male participant having physical impairment.

Limited recreational services for persons living with disabilities and unavailability of trained staff for assistance. Also, it was revealed that persons living with disabilities are not allowed to attend family gatherings or public events without approval of *“Panchayat / Jirga”*.

“They take us not as mainstream people; they either ignore us or treat with compassion”.

Male participant having physical impairment.



Karachi

All male and female participants having hearing impairment spoke about the discriminatory attitudes and behaviors of family and society; family members and outsiders cheat persons living with disabilities in financial matters as they have firm believe that PLWDs can't complain; a person living with hearing impairment must also be intellectually impaired; discriminatory behavior of immediate family members and relatives compel persons living with disabilities to live in hostels led to bullying behavior by peers in private educational institutions / hostels; private companies don't offer internships and substandard jobs offer to them in private companies.

Nawabshah

People believes that persons living with visual impairment can do only one thing in life that is to learn Quran by heart. Parents forcefully send children living with visual impairment to madrassa to learn Quran and society labeled them "Hafiz Sb".

Sukkur

In Sukkur, participants openly spoke about the concept of shame on part of parents and a common myth about persons living with visual impairment; parents wish and pray for the death of new born baby (girl / boy) with disability and fairies play with the eyes of children living with visual impairment.

BALUCHISTAN

Quetta

Almost all the participants spoke about the customs, access to education, abuse, harassment, discrimination and patronizing women living with disabilities; children living with disabilities (especially girl child) experience abuse from close relatives and strangers at home or other places as parents believes that nobody can harm a child living with disability if he or she is alone mother(s) impose restrictions ; on girl / women living with disabilities; girl / women living with disabilities are discouraged to get education; unavailability of a trained staff to assist persons living with physical impairment for example to carry his / her bag, books etc; writer demands a lot of money to assist persons living with visual impairment.

"Finding a writer is an uphill task and if anyone accepts to be a writer for us, it is on the condition of heavy remuneration. Even the examination board's official don't trust us saying you don't need a writer, you pretend that you are visually impaired to cheat".

Female participant having visual impairment.

In addition, cumbersome process to get assistive devices for persons living with disabilities; women living with disabilities face sexual harassment by close relatives; people don't accept a woman living with disability as their daughter-in-law.

"Mother-in-law asked my husband: what kind of woman you have got married with? I can't face people, there were proposals of thousand girls, only this disabled woman was left for you?"

Female participant having physical impairment.

"In childhood, I wanted to eat sugarcane, asked my aunty to give it to me but my aunty beaten me up with the sugarcane that she was eating".

Female participant having visual impairment.



SECTION IV

CONCLUSION

Persons living with disabilities of Pakistan are at the mercy of the society. Societal responses are similar across the country, yet there are some variations from place to place. State has been indifferent too. For much of the history, only one law looked after them.

Lately, however, there have been attempts in provinces to mainstream the PLWDs. These include laws passed by Sindh and Balochistan. These laws will go a long in mainstreaming the PLWDs in the country.

The order passed by honorable Lahore High Court regarding use of “person centered language” for persons living with disabilities in all official correspondence is a ray of hope that change the disability discourse. There is a need to put collective advocacy efforts to change the approach from charity to rights-based and mainstream the persons living with disabilities in the social, cultural, political and institutional arena of Pakistan.

This study contributes in the ongoing efforts to mainstream PLWDs. Any step taken tomorrow will be built on this. It is hoped that the findings of this study are capitalized by state and society.

ANNEXURE I

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

Inclusion of persons living with disabilities in the social, cultural, political and institutional arena of Pakistan was a qualitative study which probed exclusionary practices, linkages between disability and poverty and occurrence of gender-based violence through Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Sample

PMHA selected thirteen (13) districts across the country to be the part of the study based on their socio-cultural, ethnic, religious and sectarian diversity. The thirteen districts which were included in the study were:

Peshawar: Capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) with huge influx of migrants from different parts of KP; **Abbottabad:** A town in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) with Hindko speaking populace; **Swat:** 15th largest district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), popular for its exceptional natural beauty and exposed to terrorism and radicalization.



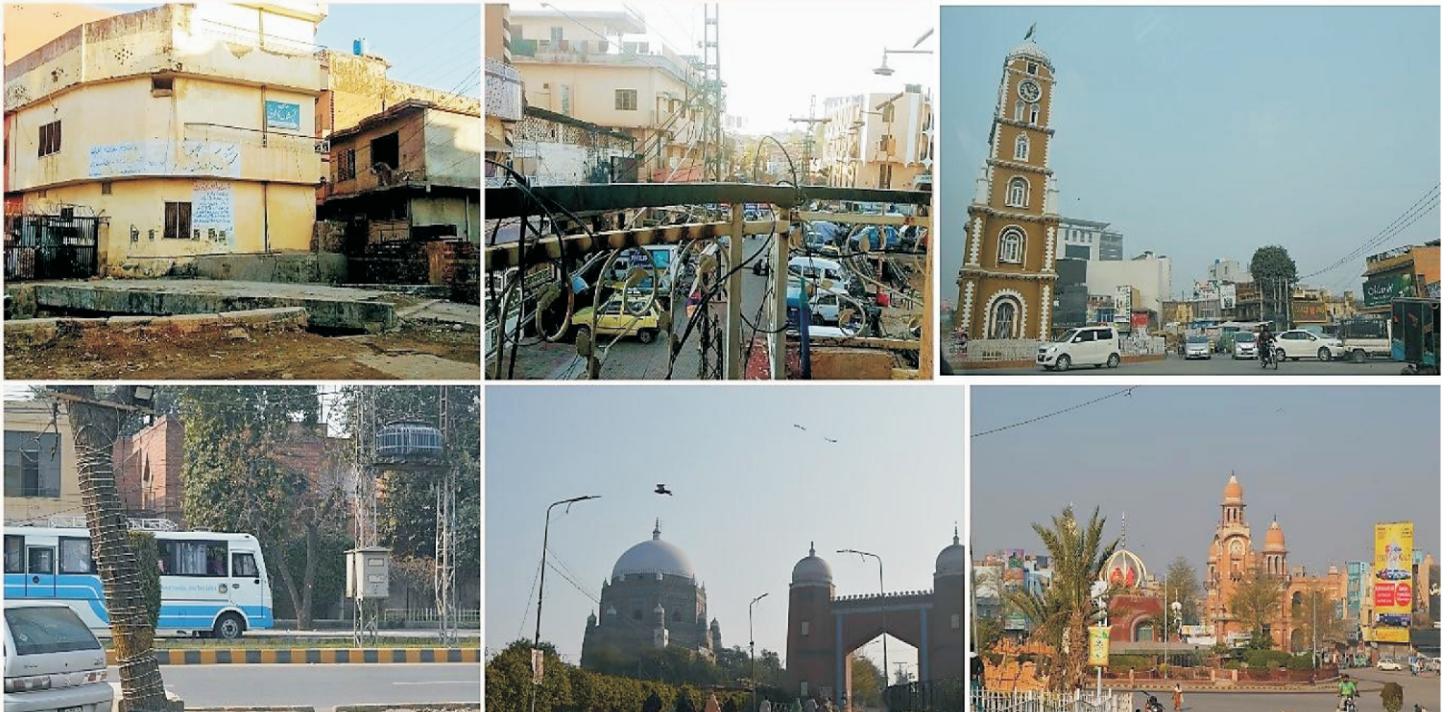
Photography: Misbah Bibi

Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT): National capital with highly-educated and urban population.



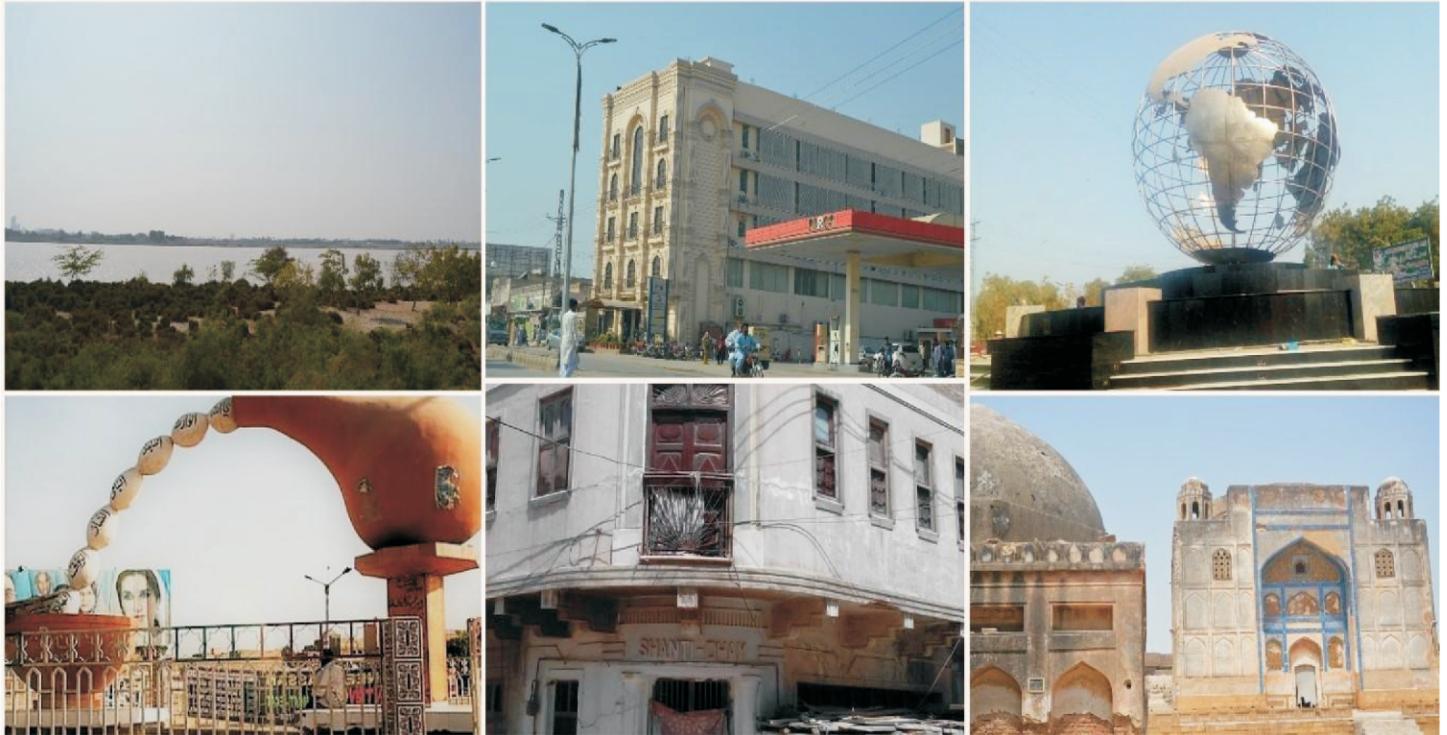
Photography: Misbah Bibi

Rawalpindi: Key garrison town in northern Punjab; **Sialkot:** Border town in central Punjab; **Lahore:** Provincial capital of Punjab; **Multan:** A key town known for shrines in southern Punjab with significant sectarian diversity.



Photography: Farah Zulqurnain & Misbah Bibi

Sukkur: A central diverse town in interior Sindh; **Nawabshah:** 27th largest city of Pakistan, an agricultural region, famous for sugarcane, mango and national hub of cotton production; **Hyderabad:** Another ethnically-diverse town with access to both interior Sindh and Karachi;



Photography: Farah Zulqurnain

Karachi: The country's only port city with ethnic diversity.

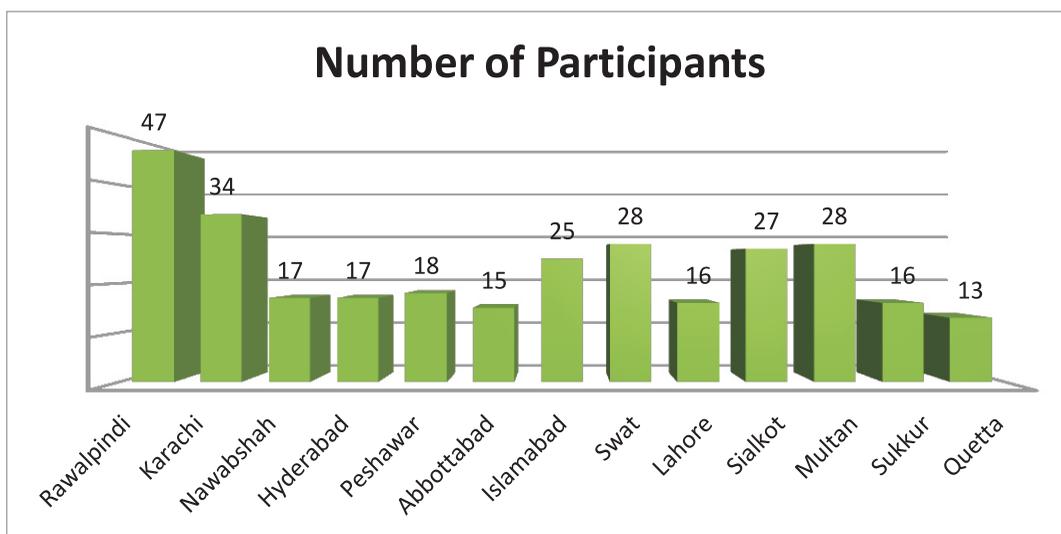


Photography: Farah Zulqurnain

Quetta: Provincial capital of Balochistan populated by Pashtuns, Baloch and Hazara community.



In order to ensure appropriate depiction of each district a sample size of 300 persons living with disabilities including 167 women living with disabilities and 133 men living with disabilities was established and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were segregated by gender and disability. As a result, PMHA conducted thirty six (36) FGDs. Each FGD consisted of ninety (90) minutes duration, had a minimum of six (6) participants and a maximum of nine (9) participants. Twenty (20) key informant interviews (KII) were also conducted with those who had first-hand knowledge about the community including disability rights advocate, head of disabled persons organizations (DPOs) and government representatives.





Sampling and Instruments: Non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling) was used for the selection of participants of the study. Consent form, demographic sheet, detailed topic guide and incentive form was developed for the FGDs.

Data Collection: FGDs were conducted by skilled lead facilitator and co-facilitator with the help of sign language interpreter and translator. FGDs were conducted and recorded after written consent from the participants for the use of transcription and translation. Demographic sheet was filled by field team prior to each focus group discussion. After the completion of each FGD, all the information gathered during the discussion was transcribed and then translated from the local language into Urdu and then from Urdu to English. To ensure the standard ethical considerations, real names of the participants have not been used in this study report.

Data Analysis: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze quantitative data and framework technique was used to analyze qualitative data of this study.

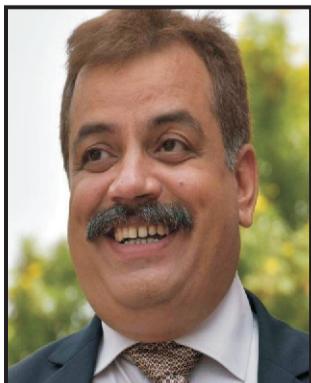
Secondary Resources

Desk review had been done.



ANNEXURE II

MAKING THE RIGHTS REAL: TOGETHER WE CAN!



Zulqurnain Asghar
*Chief Executive
(PMHA)*



Farah Zulqurnain
Project Manager



Asma Ghani
Co-Facilitator



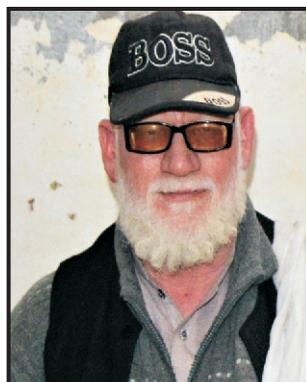
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