



## Achieving Gender Equality as Sustainable Development Goal in Umerkot District of Sindh: An Analysis of Governmental and Non-governmental Initiatives.

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### ABSTRACT

Using Umerkot District in Sindh province as a case study, this research examines gender equality in the context of the SDGs 2030 and delves into its underlying causes. It emphasises the need of achieving gender parity and women's empowerment, as well as the United Nations' comprehensive Global Sustainable Development Agenda. Pakistan provides a dramatic example of the widespread gender inequality discussed here. With interpretivism serving as the study's guiding principle and an inductive methodology, secondary data is gathered from various sources. In light of this, the study carefully analyses Sindh's complex policy initiatives, emphasising institutional viewpoints, policy limitations, and legislative actions that promote gender equality. The examination of women's issues related to work, education, and health care highlights the importance of non-governmental organisations in lobbying and grassroots empowerment, while also critically examining government measures. The SWDD and other institutional frameworks are examined, and responsibilities for an all-encompassing approach are proposed. There is recognition of the Provincial Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (2020–30) and a broad commitment to its execution amongst government agencies. The study highlights legal frameworks, social, economic, and political aspects of empowerment, as well as strategic pillars, as crucial initiatives intertwined with significant obstacles.



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## **Introduction**

The current study is to investigate the critical importance of gender equality, particularly in Umerkot District, Sindh Province, Pakistan, under SDGs 2030. This study examines gender relations using an interpretivist research philosophy and an inductive approach within the context of the broader SDGs agenda. In analysing the government's multidimensional strategy in legislative, policy, and institutional domains, this article examines the socioeconomic picture of Sindh via a gendered lens, emphasising on issues that women face in education, economic engagement, and health. In recognising government efforts, the report emphasises the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in advocacy, grassroots activities, and community empowerment. It explores the governance and institutional landscape, highlighting the roles envisioned for the Sindh Women's Development Department and the Provincial Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy (2020-30). This revolutionary path will be guided by strategic pillars such as social and economic empowerment, political and legal power, and institutional building. The study concludes by addressing the collaborative efforts of NGOs and civil society organisations in Umerkot District, emphasising their genuine commitment to gender equality beyond rhetoric to transformative action (Batool and Lewis, 2020).

## **Significance of gender equality as sustainable development goal**

When studying sustainable development in Sindh, gender equality emerges as a critical pillar for achieving social, economic, and environmental benefits. In terms of government programmes, Sindh has taken a multi-pronged strategy that focuses on legal, policy, and institutional components to empower women. Legislation has been put in place to prevent gender-based discrimination and violence, paving the way for a more equitable society. Policymaking efforts attempt to address education, economic emancipation for women, and healthcare access, all of which are considered as essential contributors to national prosperity. Nongovernmental contributions complement governmental efforts and play an important role in lobbying, awareness creation, and community empowerment. In Sindh, NGOs use community projects to give women more power at the local level. These programmes give women a sense of order and get rid of gender stereotypes. Governmental agencies and non-governmental groups work together to create a complete system where lobbying and real implementation meet. It's clear from reading the tasks that educational gaps, social and economic inequality, and women's lack of access to health care are still big problems. Coverage standards, legal measures, and local participation efforts are all being used to close these gaps. There is more to understanding the importance of female equality than just looking at numbers. It is linked to Sindh's economy and society and makes sure that half of the population's potential is used for the good of society. Involvement of women in economic activities, network growth, and decision-making will not only be a sign of fairness in society, but also a long-term necessity for progress (Solomon, 2019).

## **Women in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, women make up 48.76% of the population, which shows how important they are to society as a whole. However, women's situations vary based on their class, where they live, and the difference between country and urban areas. This shows that social growth is complex. Women, especially those with low wages, are more likely to be hurt by unequal levels of schooling, health care, and diet. Based on Bara and other sources. Women's problems are made worse by poverty, which forces them to take on difficult housework duties. The level of income of a woman has a big effect on her physical and mental health. This happens because about two-thirds of mental patients in hospitals and clinics are women, which suggests that social factors affect the health of women. Unfortunately, women's bad mental and physical health not only makes them much less productive, but it also wrecks society in a way that is harder to measure. A lot of people who work in Pakistan are women, but they face a lot of problems, like being discriminated against in Sadaqat markets and being expected to do low-paying jobs. There are still differences between men and women when it comes to jobs, with women having higher

jobless rates than men. There are many problems in the lives of women in Pakistan. To fix these issues, the government needs to focus on removing gender gaps in education, health care, and job opportunities, as explained by Umerkot District Sindh (Abid et al., 2020).

### **Gender equality in Pakistan**

Inequality between men and women affects every part of Pakistani society. It makes it hard for women to get jobs and threatens their ability to make choices about money, land, assets, and schooling (Batoool 2018). About half of Pakistan's people are women, and the country knows that strong women should play a big part in its growth. Because the people who organized Pakistan know how important women are to the country's survival, their vision stresses the need to fix orientation inequality for human progress. At the 60th meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2016, Pakistan reaffirmed its determination to reach the goals set out in Manageable Development Goal 5. They did note that there were still problems to be solved in the fight against real violence against women. Minister Maleeha Lodhi said that there are still problems, even though progress has been made. In Pakistan, the commitment of women in the workforce is always changing. More and more young women are going to school to get more education and start career programs. Even so, there are still direction gaps in schooling, and even though there are more women in management positions, there are still problems. (Hafeez et al., 2023).

The fact that women make up about 70% of the healthcare workforce shows that rules and good labour force strategies are working well (Legislature of Pakistan, 2019). The government is working hard to improve how women are portrayed in many groups, institutions, and organizations in order to reach the goals of SDG-5. This includes efforts to close orientation gaps and stop women and girls from being victims, as spelled out in new public and common law. Both the provincial and federal governments have used effective strategies to give girls more power and reduce inequality between men and women (PCSW, 2019). These projects should improve Pakistan's social scene and bring attention to the country's low gender gap. Some of their duties are to make sure that police offices are welcoming to girls, that there are places for training and recovery, that women can get baby benefits, and that laws about home violence safety are changed. For girls' better chances, Pakistan wants to stop them from getting married too young. The government has done things like pass the Childhood Marriage Act and set a limit for women to work in the public sector. A lot of work has been done to give women more power and stop discrimination and abuse (Women, 2018).

| Aspect                                | Status/Progress                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Population Composition                | Nearly half of Pakistan's population comprises women, emphasizing the importance of empowerment. |
| SDGs and Gender Equality              | Active efforts to achieve SDGs 2030, with a focus on Sustainable Development Goal 5.             |
| UN Commission for the Status of Women | Commitment expressed to SDG-5 objectives, recognizing challenges in eliminating violence.        |
| Health Sector Contribution            | Women contribute around 70% to the health workforce, indicating progress in workforce policies.  |

### **Gender disparities in education**

Sindh female secondary school enrolment is substantially lower than the national average. Despite attempts to improve educational infrastructure, girls face several barriers to enrolling and staying in school. Cultural traditions and other social attitudes, most of which promote male education, are hard to modify. Traditional traditions that encourage early child marriages compound the issue. Research shows that Sindh women face challenges to joining the job, which may prevent them from pursuing higher education. The investigation also found limited female

involvement in decision-making, financial management, land ownership, and asset holding (Durrani and Halai, 2020).

#### **b. Economic disparities and employment**

Sindh women's labour force participation statistics reflect economic inequities. Limited formal labour opportunities contribute to economic inequality and the gender wage gap. Preconceptions, societal norms, and a lack of rules exacerbate these issues. Ijaz (2018) found gender imbalance in Pakistani management. It's great to see a rise in women in these professions from 0.3% in 2012–13 to 0.5% in the fiscal year ending in June, but more effort is needed. The Monetary Study of Pakistan (2019-2020) talks about Sindh's big addition to the country's GDP: 28%, which is more than its share of the people as a whole. Even though Karachi is still the main city and job market for modern times, farming and fishing are still big sources of work, especially in rural Sindh. According to the Workforce Review (2018–19), more than 2.02 million women work in Sindh, which is only 12.1% of the total female population. One clear difference is that 68.5% of men work. (Sajjad, 2023).

#### **b. Healthcare access and reproductive rights**

A befuddling blend of social standards, a frail clinical consideration base, and low information influences ladies' admittance to clinical consideration frameworks and their opportunity of thought in Sindh. These variables have a major effect in how well clinical consideration functions, particularly for ladies. Care for moms' wellbeing, arranging a family, and preparing in mental prosperity are regions that need remarkable help. (Kalwar et al., 2019).

#### **Provincial policies on gender equality and empowerment**

Commonplace Orientation Fairness and Ladies' Strengthening Strategy, 2020-2030-Such targets are becoming well known with oppressors. The Commonplace Orientation Correspondence and Ladies' Strengthening Strategy 2020-3 is a significant stage towards Sindh Territory's comprehensive, ladies' freedom centred society. This approach focuses on every common division, and WDD Sindh under the Ladies' Improvement Office works with dispersion. The product gives neighbourhood language duplicates and improved or more limited variants for openness. To further develop flow, WDD will put the strategy on its site, so partners outside this field and government authorities might see it. Other than these cross-departmental discussions and working gatherings, briefings with authorities from numerous offices will be led. The studios expect to kill the strategy and examine jobs, commitments, and coordination (Nawaz et al., 2021). These jobs incorporate distinguishing line services using their departmental orientation centre people. An input circle is significant. The WDD carries out instruments to follow progress, request criticism, and survey influence against Strategy Objectives, Goals, and Techniques. Moreover, crucial pointers dependent simply upon the strategy's design empower a thorough and information-driven execution observing pattern. This proactive methodology centres the WDD's strategy execution as opposed to data spread. Mindfulness, coordinated effort, and an input circle are the division's devices to change strategy goals into activities that shield Sindh's orientation fairness and ladies' strengthening future (Husain et al., 2019).

#### **Governmental initiatives for gender equality in Sindh**

In accordance with the stated tasks, the Sindh Women's Development Department (WDD) sets precise goals for each of its seven strategic areas, as outlined in the Strategic goals document.

| Strategic Area       | Strategy                                           | Objective                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Legislative Advocacy | Formulate and promote laws, rules, and regulations | To advocate for legislation eliminating gender-based discrimination and safeguarding the rights of women and girls, aligning with constitutional and |

|                            |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            |                                                         | international commitments.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Institutionalized Planning | Undertake, encourage, and support institutionalization  | To mainstream gender perspectives in provincial laws, policies, and plans, ensuring gender equality is integral to government departments' work and driving policy coherence across Sindh.      |
| Research Promotion         | Promote gender research, evidence gathering             | To promote research on priority gender issues, generating evidence for advocacy and influencing public policy, ensuring informed decision-making.                                               |
| Mainstreaming Gender       | Support gender mainstreaming across Government          | To support, coordinate, and enhance stakeholders' capacity for gender mainstreaming, introducing planning tools and strengthening mechanisms to articulate gender impact in official materials. |
| International Monitoring   | Monitor and report on provincial efforts                | To monitor and report on Sindh's compliance with international commitments on human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment, aligning with various conventions and agreements.         |
| Advocacy and Networking    | Act for advocating, lobbying, networking, and coalition | To advocate, lobby, network, and build coalitions for women and girls' rights and gender equality, ensuring representation in policy and budget development.                                    |

### **Governance and institutional mechanisms**

The end of a public Service for Ladies' Improvement on June 9, 2011, after the endorsement of the Eighteenth Established Correction requiring devolution to regions, presents one basic test: proficiently satisfying this command through Sindh WDD. This order, in any case, requires not just accomplishing a higher situation than different offices, yet in addition helping them in adjusting their strategies and practices to the optimistic orientation equity targets illustrated in the strategy. Understanding that orientation balance and ladies' freedom go past a solitary service needs a planned reaction to the issue. It requests cooperation across the public authority, including specialist organizations, common society players, funders, and the business area. In this section, the cooperative undertaking is characterized as data imparting to joint mediation, as

well as its observing and appraisal results, determined to form orientation information into skill working for information hole filling. (Patel, 2019).

### **Proposed functions of Sindh women's development department**

The elements of the Sindh Ladies' Improvement Division have developed fundamentally beginning around 2003, with a specific accentuation on supporting orientation mainstreaming. The points of the Sindh Ladies' Improvement Division have developed over some time, especially after 2003, when orientation mainstreaming turned into a significant need. An audit of existing powerful prescribed procedures for ladies' hardware, as well as the revaluation of usefulness across branches, has brought about new capability thoughts. All undertakings recorded in Timetable II, Segment 38 of the Sindh Government Rules of Business 1986, Corrected up to 2019, showed the division's obligation to advance orientation equity and ladies' strengthening (Cheema et al., 2021).

**Formulation of Public Policies and Laws: Advocating for Gender Equality:** The Sindh Women's Headway Division (WDD) creates arrangements and regulation to defend and advance direction equilibrium and ladies' and young ladies' privileges. This crucial capacity needs forceful authority support and procedure improvement while following to safeguarded standards and worldwide obligations. The WDD pioneers' real strategies that advance consideration and safeguard ladies and young ladies' essential privileges in similarity with global norms (Guriro et al., 2019).

**Mainstreaming Gender: Integrating Equality into Governance:** The WDD orders direction consistency to reach out past fundamental correspondence and become an inborn piece of organization. This includes cautiously integrating direction into general standards, structures, methods, monetary plans, and execution strategies. The WDD gives suggestions and strategies for checking and evaluating direction mainstreaming projects. The WDD needs to make a climate where worth is the standard by incorporating direction consistency into the organization.

**Supporting Research, Statistics, and Data Collection: Informed Decision-Making:** Informed counsel requires exploration, estimations, and understanding. The WDD works with direction consistency examination and engages ladies and young ladies. Admittance to dependable and pertinent data is fundamental for proof-based policymaking. The WDD elevates data-driven heading to close information holes for more compelling and centred actions. (Hussain et al., 2022).

**Capacity Development and Institutional Strengthening:** Expanding establishment and individual requirements is generally important to accomplish direction consistency. The WDD hopes to lead restrictions and establishment-building exercises. By spreading data, raising abilities, and extending accomplice limits, the division expects to help direction correspondence. Empowering individuals and associations work better and all the more reasonably to eliminate value obstacles (Memon et al., 2021).

**Coordination and Collaboration:** The WDD sorts out, teams up, structures associations, and oversees frameworks with accomplices to advance change and participation. This includes cooperating with government organizations, non-official gatherings, people in general, and different partners who are enthusiastic about direction decency. The WDD trusts these gatherings would advance participation, viability, and a more far-reaching climate for direction decency in Sindh. (Siddiqi et al., 2022).

### **Strategic pillars**

#### **a. Social Empowerment**

To make Sindh a spot where ladies can undoubtedly partake in their political and fundamental privileges, liberated from viciousness, segregation, and misuse, is the objective of the social turn of events. The ICCPR, CEDAW, and the Pakistani Constitution all pressure how significant it is for the public authority to assist ladies with acquiring social power. As a pioneer, Sindh has settled on significant choices, for example, passing progressive regulations, giving more land to

individuals in specific value groups, and setting up common freedoms-based committees. (Sharma et al., 2023). A significant arrangement of regulations is the Sindh Locally Situated Laborers Demonstration of 2018, the Sindh Maternity Advantages Demonstration of 2018, and the Aggressive Behavior at Home (Counteraction and Assurance) Demonstration of 2013. In any case, there are issues, particularly in country spots where individuals are frequently pushed to wed or become Christians. In response, the SCSW needs to manage these issues in a wide manner, considering the different scope of social foundations and troublesome populace elements. Even though authority and lawful headway have been made, constrained changes are as yet an issue. In 2020, HRCP detailed 25 cases per month, a large portion of which were from rustic Sindh. Maltreatment in the home, assault, and killings of ladies are still huge issues. Other than taking care of these issues, genuine social improvement strategies ought to likewise ensure that young ladies' fundamental and social liberties are protected. (Urooj et al., 2022).

**b. Economic Empowerment** Sindh has serious areas of strength for made by worldwide and protected prerequisites since it knows that engaging ladies financially is great for the nation's development. The Ladies Financial Gathering assists ladies in business and showcasing by giving them access to safe work environments, individuals on the lookout, and development centre points. The Sindh Ladies in Horticulture Demonstration of 2019 and the Locally Established Laborers Demonstration of 2018 are two new regulations that further develop work regulations and show that the territory is resolved to fair monetary standards for everybody. Sindh has a low pace of ladies working, even though they make a major expansion to the nation's Gross domestic product. This shows that centring reforms is so significant. Since the region's economy is so mind-boggling, savvy strategy changes are expected to build the number of ladies working in numerous areas. To get more ladies to work in the economy, we ought to zero in on working on their abilities, making sure they approach cash, and fixing issues in the disorderly sector. (Abid et al., 2020).

**Political Empowerment:** Political improvement plans to assist ladies with shielding their common and political freedoms and effectively taking part in governmental issues and casting a ballot. The ECP should endeavour hard to decrease the resident enlistment direction hole. SCSW works with large companies and philosophical associations to make casting a ballot and governmental issues less complex for ladies. The principal part for female candidates is finished, however, more must be finished to persuade ladies to embrace governmental issues. Ladies' autonomy sets political, monetary, and accepted practices. SCSW endeavours to eliminate lawful and cultural boundaries to ladies casting a ballot so legislative issues are fair and inclusive. (World Bank Gathering, 2016).

**Legal Empowerment:** Real fortifying guarantees that minorities aren't victimized by the law and that the public authority keeps clear standards. The Sindh Assembling Plants Revision Act, 2021, and Sindh Water Chiefs Act, 2021 exhibit Sindh's obligation to ladies' freedoms. Notwithstanding, science and headway ought to address genuine inquiries. Changes are expected to characterize kid marriage, explain the police's job, and explain the Forceful Way of Behaving at Home Show wrongdoings. SCSW's careful recommendations for the Social occasion are urgent to reinforcing and grow ladies' rights. (Janjua et al., 2021).

### **Key measures and challenges**

| Strategic Pillar   | Focus Area                 | Key Measures                                                                                                                                                        | Challenges                                                                                   |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Social Empowerment | Fundamental & Civil Rights | Progressive legislation, increased budget, and a four-year strategy against sexual violence. Challenges include forced conversions, crimes against women, and rural | Tackling forced conversions, persistent crimes, and enhancing rural response infrastructure. |

|                       |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       |                                     | response improvements.                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                   |
| Economic Empowerment  | Women's Economic Participation      | Establishment of the Women Economic Council, legislative advancements, and initiatives for women entrepreneurs. Challenges include limited women's labor force participation and economic disparities. | Challenges involve low women's labor force participation, economic disparities, and the need for targeted policies in agriculture.                |
| Political Empowerment | Civil and Political Liberties       | Implementation of minimum quotas, efforts for women's voter registration, and collaboration with political parties.                                                                                    | Challenges involve addressing the gender gap in voter registration and enhancing active engagement for improved women's political representation. |
| Legal Empowerment     | Non-discriminatory Legal Frameworks | Progressive legislation, ongoing amendments, and review for legal gap recommendations. Challenges include defining child marriage and refining offenses.                                               | Challenges encompass defining child marriage, refining offenses, and outlining roles, like police involvement, in laws related to women's rights. |

### **Non- governmental initiatives for gender equality**

NGOs assume a significant part in advancing orientation uniformity and tending to ladies' interests in the Umerkot Region. Large numbers of these associations make huge commitments to propelling ladies' strengthening, testing orientation shows, and bringing issues to light about significant themes. At last, this segment examines the fluctuated jobs of NGOs in campaigning, grassroots activism, and local area strengthening, with an accentuation on common society exercises.

#### **Role of NGOs in advocacy and awareness**

NGOs act as strong backers for orientation correspondence, with the main role of instructing society about ladies' freedom concerns. These associations lead compelling backing efforts in the Umerkot Area, bringing issues to light of biased ways of behaving and advancing an equivalent society. Working with neighbourhood networks, NGOs endeavour to destroy negative generalizations and challenge imbued orientation standards. They need to encourage a comprehensive mentality of orientation fairness in ladies employing studios, workshops, and media programs, permitting them to partake in the opportunities they are qualified for without discrimination (Lal et al., 2023).

#### **Grassroots initiatives and community empowerment**

At the grassroots level, NGOs focus on local area preparation endeavours. Such projects are pointed toward creating abilities, empowering ladies to obtain huge abilities and schooling, as well as giving the fundamental help. By reaching networks straightforwardly, NGOs might fit their drives to address extraordinary issues. In such manner, abilities preparing programs give ladies utilitarian skills that prepare them for more dynamic cooperation in the financial setting. Beside proficiency advancement, instructive endeavours help to separate orientation

generalizations by empowering females to seek after advanced education. By building encouraging groups of people, NGOs give a spot to ladies to impart data about their everyday environments, give common assistance, and work together to conquer issues. NGOs advocate extends that empower ladies to accomplish financial autonomy and increment their monetary dynamic power inside locales or groupings. (World Wellbeing Association, 2017).

### **Role of civil society organizations**

Common society associations assume a significant part in supporting and enhancing the exercises of NGOs in the Umerkot Area. These organizations act as mediators among associations and legislative substances, guaranteeing a more planned and compelling way to deal with orientation correspondence. By encouraging associations and joint efforts, common society organizations increment the effect of NGOs, diverting assets and directing them where they are generally required. They plan to establish an empowering environment that supports orientation's delicate approaches and handles underlying issues that sustain orientation disparities. Common society associations likewise partake in examination and battling to impact strategy changes and upgrade the general structure for orientation fairness. Through their unified endeavours, these associations help to fabricate a culture wherein ladies might thrive without confronting bias, and orientation fairness is engrained in the social, financial, and political arenas. (Lohana et al., 2021).

### **Conclusion**

Chasing orientation uniformity in Umerkot Locale, the mix of legislative drives with the steady endeavours of NGOs and common society organizations fills in as a signal of progress. An all-encompassing methodology that covers social, monetary, political, and institutional variables involves a total end of orientation boundaries. Women's activists see what is happening as problematic for ladies looking for schooling, business, and medical services. NGOs' grassroots activities, network development, and support crusades address these holes, showing common society's inventiveness. These economies assist with developing human progress settled in orientation requirements and biases into a Umerkot where everybody buckles down similarly. Sindh Ladies' Improvement Office (WDD) administration and institutional frameworks reflect orientation balance. From regulative campaigning to orientation mainstreaming in administration, the WDD expects to feature and lay out a setting in which all perspectives and circles of public strategy inclusion practice incorporate implicit fairness for the two sexes, not simply pronounce it. Significant level exercises and objectives are covered under the methodology mainstay of social, monetary, political, criminal, and institutional strengthening. Administrative enhancements, institutional reinforcing, and monetary strengthening drives show progress, yet constrained change, financial disparities, and citizen orientation lopsided characteristics sabotage long-haul endeavours. Campaigning, political strengthening, and dynamic populace support government drives. They apply synergistic strain that pulls Umerkot Locale towards orientation balance as an unquestionable requirement. As the excursion proceeds, the combination of legislative responsibility, common society activity, and local area support is basic for building long-haul choices and guaranteeing that the capacities, everything being equal, paying little heed to orientation, are saddled for normal development.

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