



LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH DISABILITIES IN PUNJAB

POLICY BRIEF





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Inclusive Education for Children in Punjab

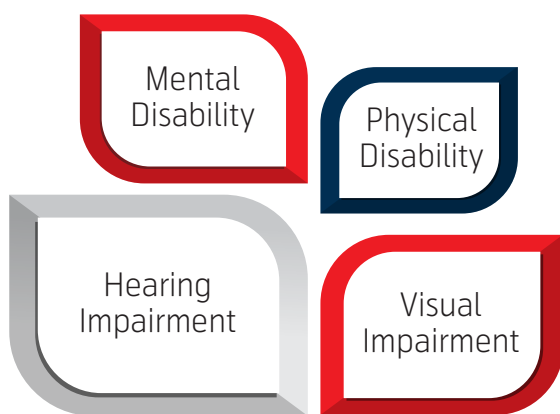
Inclusive education is about removing barriers that exclude people from the education system. The concept has emerged as a major theme in education policy globally and is a core component of the Sustainable Development Goals. In Pakistan, the definition of inclusive education is still evolving and is currently focused foremost on extending education to children with disabilities through special education.

Special education is education that is designed specifically to meet the unique learning needs of children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). These children often face systemic barriers to accessing education opportunities, negative attitudes, and exclusion by society (either purposely or inadvertently).

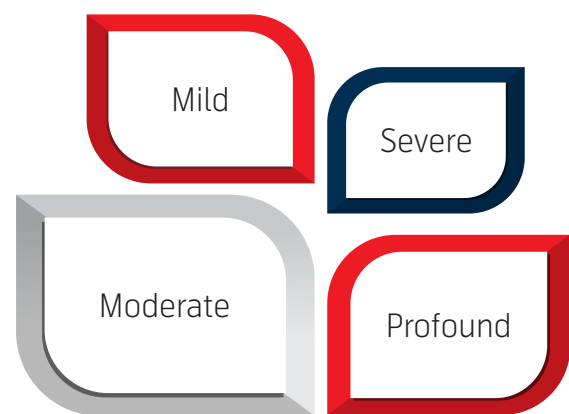
The ultimate objective of measures focused on education for children with disabilities is to ensure their social inclusion, rehabilitation and economic empowerment while easing their integration into the wider society, giving them an opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

Disability is often a multidimensional experience for any individual affecting the physical body, experiences, cognition, and communication.

Types of disability are broadly defined into four categories



These categories are in turn categorized by order of severity



Focusing on the needs of the disabled is not only a rights issue but also linked to overall growth of the country. There are both direct and indirect economic implications of excluding people with disabilities from participating in the education system and wider economic activities.

Overall, Pakistan could be losing anywhere between 4.9% to 6.3% of GDP due to the marginalization of people with disabilities. Policymakers are now trying to rectify the lack of emphasis on inclusive education. Punjab, being Pakistan's largest province, has a new policy for Special Education which speaks to several challenges of providing a wholesome education to children with disabilities. In parallel, a strategy for Inclusive Education has also been finalized to help bring children (of all backgrounds) even with minor learning disabilities into the mainstream.

However, in Punjab, similar to the rest of the country, there are far more children with mild to moderate than severe/profound disabilities. Thus, the policy challenge of addressing the needs of disabled children given the limited capacity of Punjab's School and Special Education Departments (including lack of teachers' skills in dealing with SEND in mainstream schools) is arguably greater, beyond the scope of Punjab's new drafted special education policy that covers children with severe and profound disabilities.

The Inclusive Education Strategy (IES) developed however, focuses on the pertinence of also responding to the needs of children with mild and moderate disabilities. Development of the IES thus provides a potential framework for inclusive education to help address needs of all children with disabilities.

Disability Among School Age Children in Punjab

According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) World Disability Report 2011, persons with disabilities make up 13.4 % of the total population of Pakistan, accounting for approximately 28 million people. However, official statistics report a much lower number.

According to the Punjab Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2018, 6.4% of children aged 2-4 and 17.9% of all children between the ages of 5-17 in Punjab possess one or more functional disability (in a range of domains including hearing, vision, communication/comprehension, learning, mobility and emotions) under the Washington Group definitions (Box 1). The ASER pilot study found that 2.1% of children had mild disabilities and 1.1% moderate disabilities (primarily relating to vision and hearing). The TEACH study suggested that at least one in ten children experienced disabilities that had a significant impact on some aspect of their daily lives*.

Box 1: How to define the disabled?

Questions on disability developed by the Washington Group represents the most recent thinking around disability and draw support from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Disability is defined as, "Persons with disabilities include 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*".

A series of questions based on the Washington Group on Disability Statistics are determined by the framework of the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health. The questions address six core functional domains—seeing, hearing, communication, cognition, walking, and self-care—and provide basic necessary information on disability comparable to that being collected worldwide via the WG disability tools*.

* As part of the Teaching All Children Effectively (TEACH) project, that team used the Washington Group's Child Functioning Module for children aged 5 to 17 years and collected data across 1050 households in 3 districts of Punjab. Findings note some important results, particularly in relation to education, a key focus of the TEACH project.

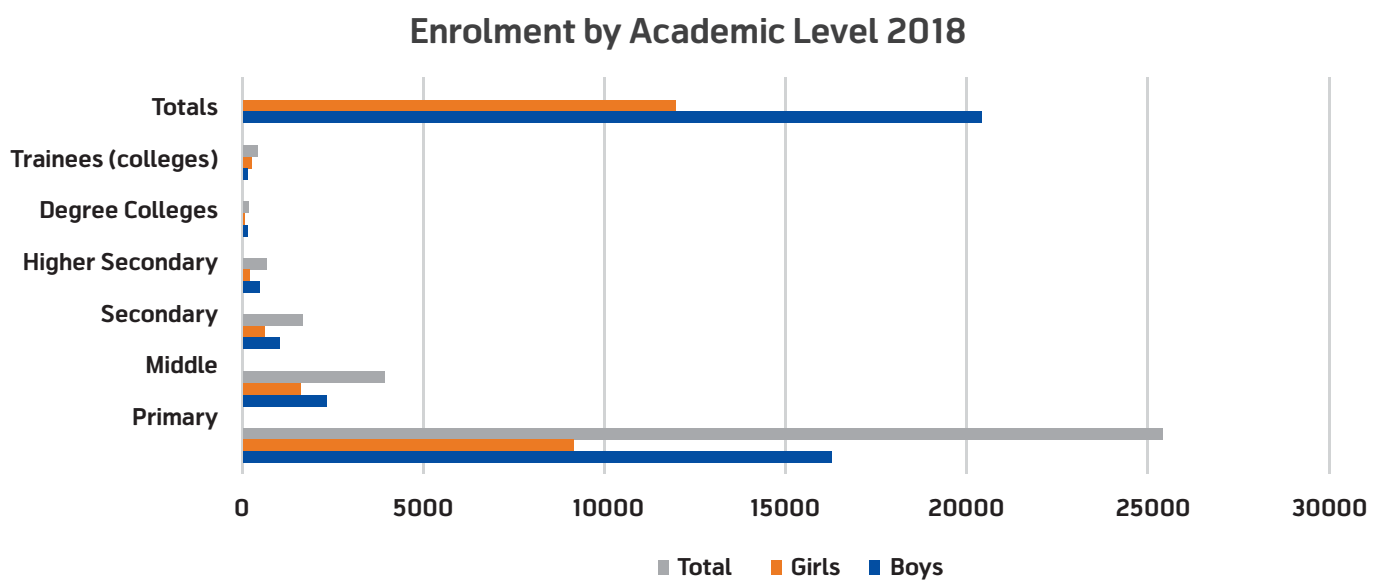
* F, Malik, R., Kamran, S., Rose, P., Singal, N., Bari, 2018.

* National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS). 2019.

All sources indicate that children with disabilities were significantly more likely to be out of school than other children. In fact, children with disabilities remain ten times less likely to attend school than those without, and even if they attend school, they are most likely to drop out earlier than their peers*. This disparity becomes more pronounced in the case of girls. The ASER pilot study found that in Central Punjab 23% of 8–12 year olds with moderate to severe disability were out of school, compared to 6% of those without disability. Lack of adequate adaptation of facilities and access to appliances contributed to children with physical disabilities being unable to attend school.

Moreover, different forms of exclusion can reinforce each other. There is evidence (for instance from the TEACH survey) that disabled children are more likely to be in poorer households, and girls with disabilities are more likely to be out of school than boys. Girls in special education institutes are outnumbered by boys, with the ratio of girls to boys declining more at each advanced level as shown in figure 1 (the exception is the enrolment in teacher training colleges).

Figure 1: Enrolment by Academic Level 2018



Source: SpED, 2019.

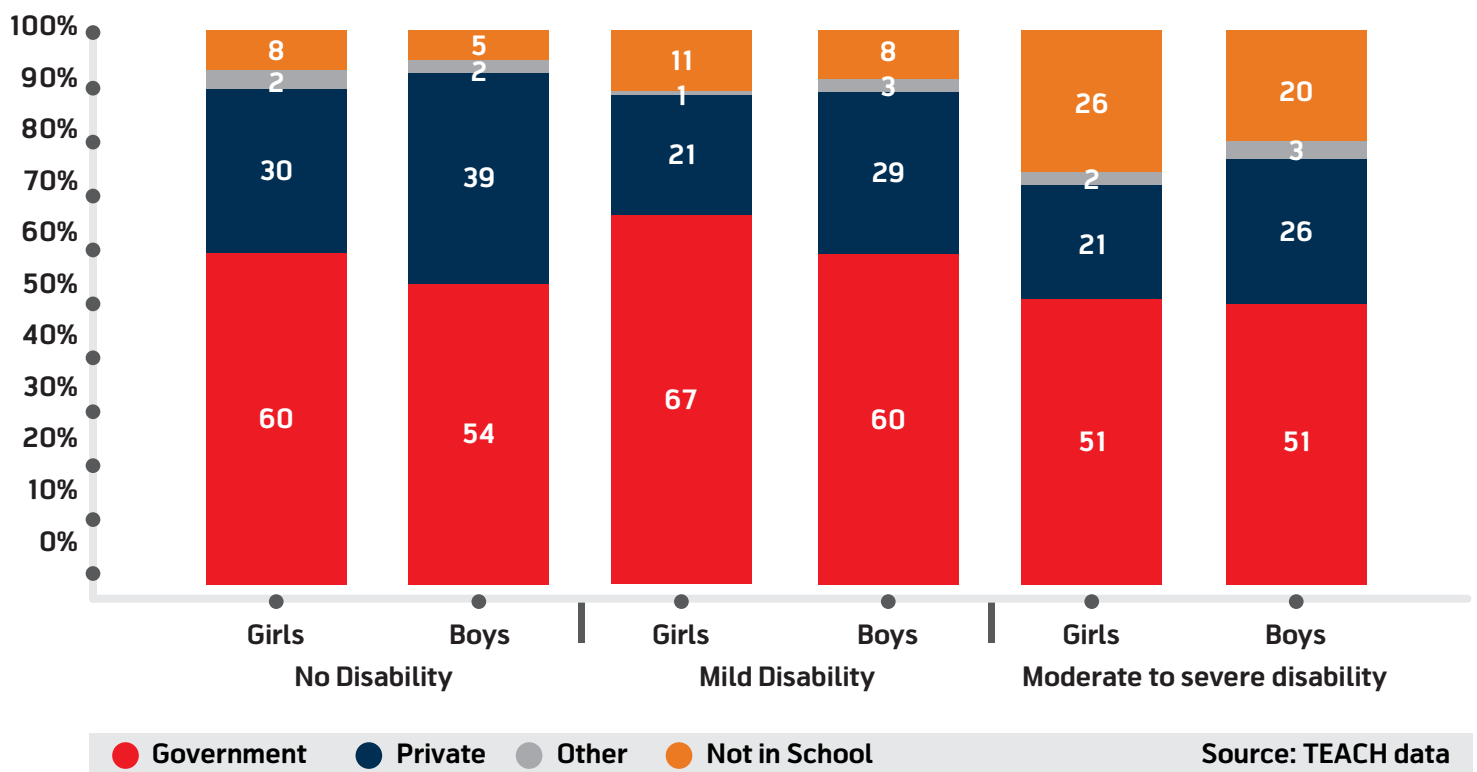
This is keeping with the larger trend of parents investing in their son's education regardless of whether they have a disability or not. Due to prevalent societal norms, girls bear the double burden of discrimination because of their gender and disability. Stigma often leads families to conceal girls' disabilities. Overall, girls remain more likely to be out of school.

There is hardly any research or data available on the numbers, or specific educational needs, of children with cognitive or learning disabilities while the ability of schools to recognize SENDs remains limited. ASER 2019 found that 20.8% of schools surveyed in Punjab reported that they had pupils with disabilities, amounting to only 0.24% of students.

* Plan International (2013). "Children with Disabilities 10 Times Less Likely to go to School." from <https://plan-international.org/news/2013-12-03-children-disabilities-10-times-less-likely-go-school>.

The following chart maps the type of school attended against severity of reported disabilities among boys and girls in Punjab. This information is based on data collected from three districts of Punjab. While the sample is small, findings provide evidence on how children identified as having moderate to severe disabilities had differences in their school enrolments patterns, attendance and grade repetition. In practice The Special Education Department (SpED) is only addressing the needs of children with relatively severe and specific SEND (such as blind and deaf children) while School Education Department (SED) focused on children with all other kinds and degrees of disability.

Figure 2: Type of School Attended According to Disability and Gender*



* Ibid.

Structure of Special Education in Punjab

Policy Framework

Over the period of PESP2 at least up to the elections of July 2018, inclusive and special education was not an explicit focus of education policy in Punjab. Policy was driven mainly by the objectives of increasing education enrolment and improving the quality of education and was driven in particular by targets to increase education participation. The Roadmap that was the principal mechanism for driving the achievement of education sector targets in Punjab until the 2018 elections but did not set any targets related to addressing SEND.

The Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2014 provided a legal basis for education for all children and included provisions for addressing the needs of marginalised children. However, the way in which universal education for children with SEND should be met was not made explicit in the law but instead was dependent on intended subsidiary regulations*. The FCDO funded Punjab Inclusive Education Program was the only significant initiative to address the needs of children with SEND.

Following the establishment of SpED, the number of institutions under it rose from 51 to 294, catering to over 32,000 students from just 4000. The increased scale and coverage of facilities within SpED's mandate has pushed the need to formulate a framework to ensure that educational needs of children with SEND are fully met (recent initiatives discussed in the last section).

Infrastructure Constraints

SpED currently provides educational services to children with SEND across a number of institutions. It runs 294 institutes including 282 schools / centres, six colleges, three vocational training and three teacher training institutes. Following the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, 20 institutes of special education were devolved to the province. These Institutes are spread across 36 districts of Punjab.

Figure 3: Institutions Catering to Specific Disability

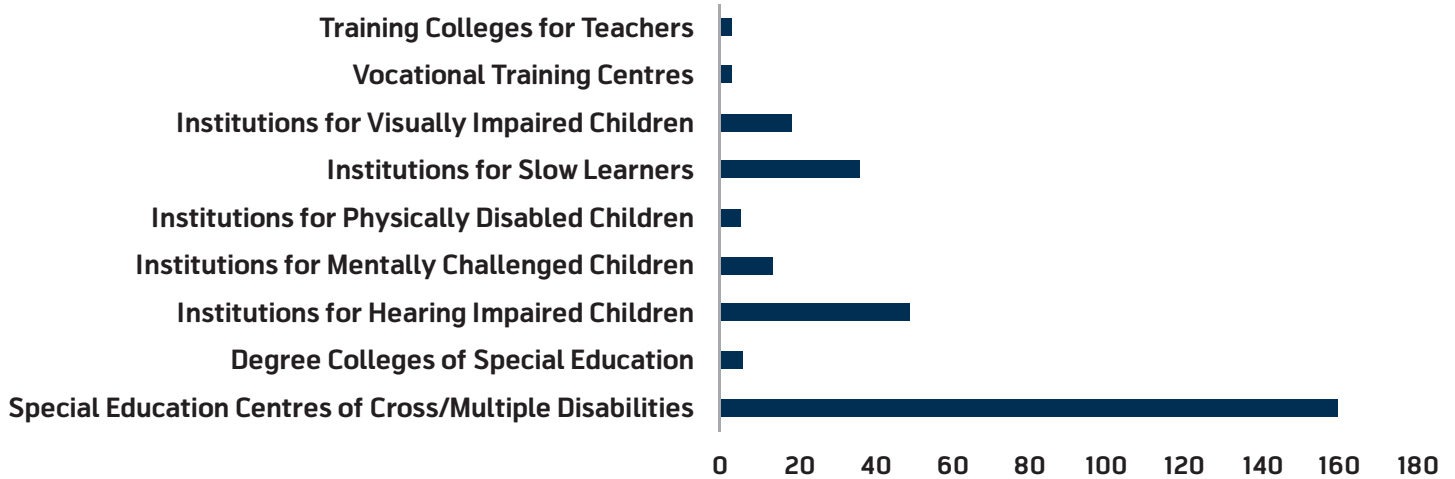


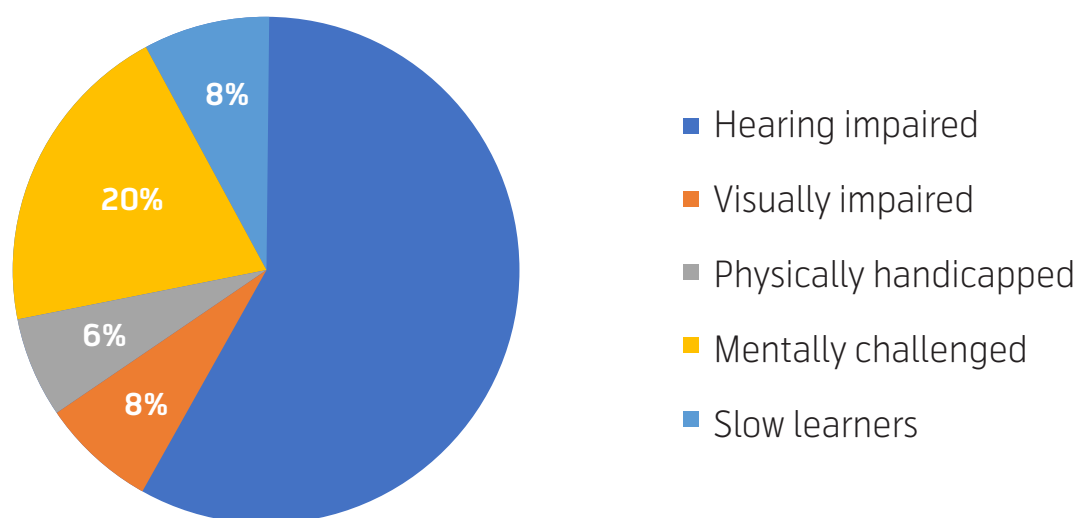
Figure 4: Geographical Spread of SpED Institutions

Number of Institutions	Color Code
0-5	Blue
6-10	Yellow
11-15	Green
16-20	Orange
21-25	Dark Green



As mentioned earlier, SpED is mandated to provide equal access to quality education for all children with severe and profound disabilities in Punjab. In practice SpED is only addressing the needs of children with relatively severe and specific SENDs (such as blind and deaf children). Enrolment data at special education institutes shows that children with hearing impairment constitute the largest group.

Figure 5: Enrolment in SpED facilities by disability in Punjab, 2018



While the number of children enrolled in SpED institutions quadrupled between 2003 and 2013, over the period of PESP2 the rate of growth has been much slower. Between 2013 and 2020 enrolment increased by a third, over a period when Punjab's population increased by about 20%*.

Ability to address the needs of these children requires institutional development and strengthening of the department. There is no formal Early Childhood Development programme in special education schools and centres and regular schools are not prepared to meet the physical and psychological needs of students with disabilities.

Currently, SpED does not have an administrative tier below the divisional headquarters. This gap hampers adequate response to district level SpED requirements. To address this challenge, SpED relies on inter-departmental coordination across all tiers of its work. It relies on District Education Offices for reliable data and surveys related to special children, on SED for monitoring and evaluation and provision of specific special education services (which SED is not qualified to provide). Overall, SpED has been under-resourced to effectively meet the needs of children with severe or profound SEND, while SED has had neither a clear mandate nor effective capacity to address SEND within mainstream schools.

A large number of critical staff positions remain vacant and administrative posts have not been restructured to maximize use of existing staff. This has led to inefficiencies in service delivery and resulted in a sub-optimal student-teacher ratio. In its current state, the curriculum does not fully cater to the differentiated learning needs of children with different types and levels of disabilities. Since learning outcomes for children with SEND are not defined, it is difficult to track child's progress and offer remedial teaching.

There is little evidence that provision for SEND in mainstream government schools has improved and there is no data available on the quality of education provided to children with SEND.

* The average annual rate of growth of enrolment was 21.1% from 2003 to 2008, 9.0% from 2008 to 2013, and 4.1% from 2013 to 2020.

Financial Constraints

SpED has been under-resourced effectively to meet the needs of children with severe or profound SEND, while SED has had neither a clear mandate nor effective capacity to address SEND within mainstream schools. Budgetary allocations have been inadequate to address educational needs of children with SEND in accordance with the Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act 2014. Improvements in service delivery for children with SEND require access to funding and financial plans for these must be included in budgets.

A few trends stand out:

Non-development expenditure fell significantly in nominal terms between FY2013 and Fy2016.

The rate of development budget execution has only exceeded 50% in one year and fell to 4% in 2018/19.

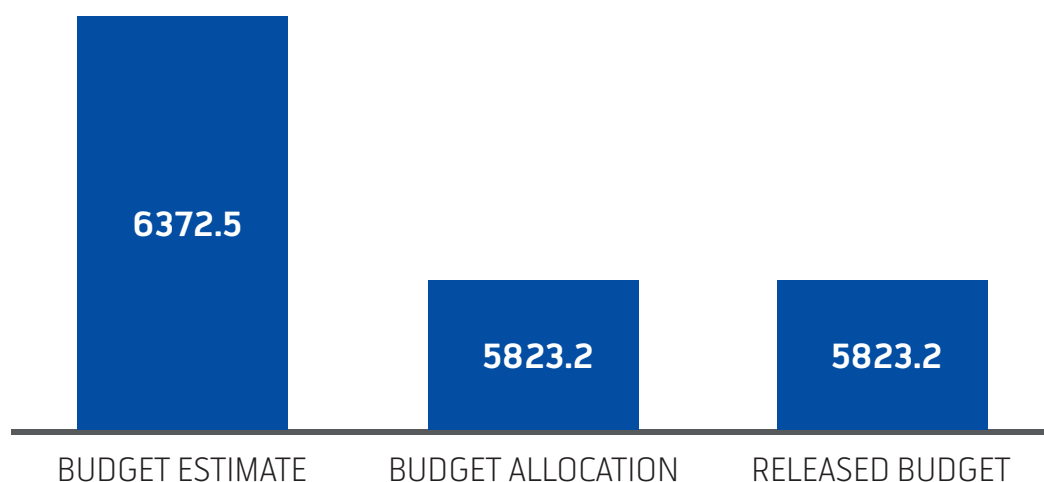
Development spending peaked at PKR 174 million (approximately £1.37 million) in FY2017, falling back to just PKR 22 million (approximately £0.12 million) in FY2019.

In total only 21.2% of the development budget was executed over the whole period

As a department of the provincial government, SpED's budget is provided as part of provincial estimates through annual budgetary cycles. The budget consists of a) Current component allocated for expenses of SpED Secretariat and its subordinate offices, b) Development component comprising of various provincial schemes as part of its Annual Development Plan and c) District current component provided directly by the provincial Finance Department to District Education Authorities.

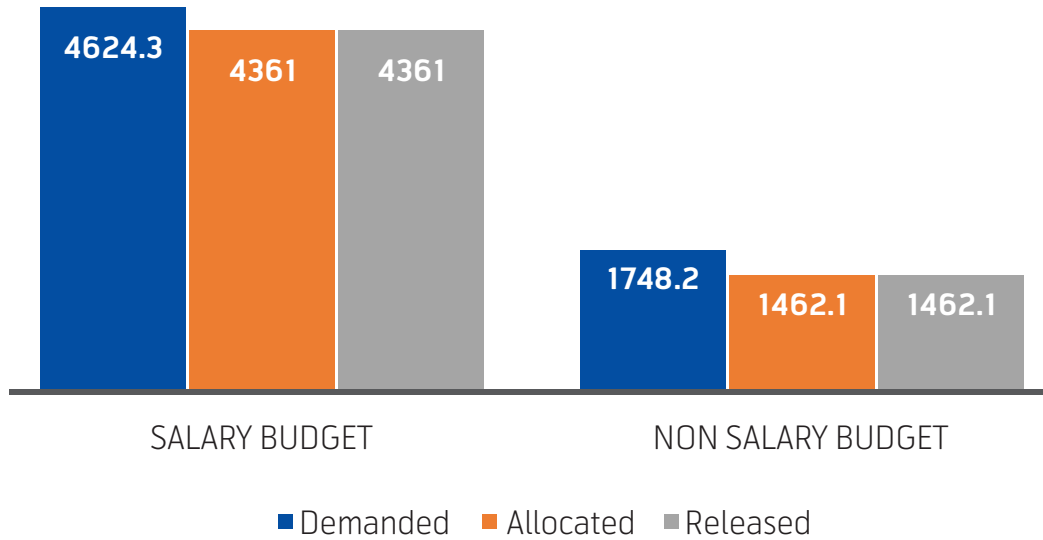
SpED's allocated budget of Rs. 5.82 billion for the FY 2018-19 was 91% of original estimates. The released budget was 100% of the allocated amount. The overall budgetary expenditure was Rs. 4.69 billion or 80% of the released budget for FY 2018-19.

Figure 6 – Budget estimates, allocation and released district budgets 2018-19 (millions)



100% of the salary and non-salary budget of PKR 4.36 billion and PKR 1.46 billion respectively was released in the FY, against which utilization was 81% for salary and 75% for non-salary expenses.

Figure 7 – Salary and non-salary funding 2018-19 (millions)



An increase in the non-salary element of the district current budget can help facilitate improvements in the provision of capacity building for staff at all levels, training in assistive technology, skills updating, etc. Moreover, disbursements need to be timelier and utilization needs to improve. As is evident, the non-salary budget was roughly a third of the salary budget. This severely limits improvements in service delivery. Like other sectors, education also suffers from poor financial planning and management. A more robust accounting system combined with time sensitive disbursements and increased funds for development expenditure are required for more effective service delivery.

Barriers to inclusive education in Punjab?

Cambridge Education (2020) collected information in five districts in Punjab (Attock, Rawalpindi, Muzafargarh, Bahawalpur and Lahore) from 179 teachers in 52 public and private schools, as well as focus group discussions with parents and communities to assess the capacity of the education system to address the needs of Inclusive Education, as well as the effects of past interventions. Some of the key findings are presented below below:

01

Definition and classification:

There is a lack of clarity regarding the definition of disability. What constitutes a disabled child with mild and moderate disability eligible for admission is not known to the school administration or any of the stakeholders. There is no official classification of intellectual cognitive disabilities.

Data availability and quality:

There is no disaggregated data on disability and corresponding indicators of exclusion.

02

03

Coordination and stakeholder engagement:

There is an overall lack of coordination between departments which requires strengthening for effective implementation beyond strategy development.

Social barriers:

Parents of children with special needs feel discouraged from sending their children to school due to societal attitudes which includes discriminatory attitude of peers in the schools. Children with disabilities are often out of school due to a lack of access to educational facilities.

04

05

Assistive technology:

The lack of assistive devices become a barrier to a child's education and in most cases are not available to the children with disabilities in schools.

Poverty and marginalisation:

Children with disabilities from poor families are facing poor nutrition and have no access to health services often not identified. These children and their families need support.

06

07

Learning and assessments:

The current system and nature of assessments does not cater to the needs of children with all abilities; it does not measure how much they have achieved and what are the next steps for their learning (formative learning).

Teacher training and development:

Teachers receive one off training which are insufficient to provide the necessary skills for inclusive education.

08

09

School management:

Many trained teachers are not able to make changes in their schools or classroom after training and one reason identified was the attitude of the Head teachers who at times prefer a segregated model of education.

Awareness and attitudes:

Awareness on disability rights and on the right to education of Children With Disabilities (CWDs) in mainstream schools is not there resulting in low demand from parents.

10

Lack of data impacts planning

Lack of data on disability remains a major obstacle to developing disability sensitive policies and programmes, not only in Pakistan but globally. Non-availability of sufficient and reliable data has held back delivery of special education. As a result, it has not been possible to provide more than a partial and incomplete assessment of the scale and characteristics of SEND.

Early identification of disability challenges is important as it allows design of optimal support for such children. Late identification not only makes interventions difficult, but also reduces their impact. This underscores the importance of data needed to know, as early as possible, if a child is facing a challenge. However, policy makers do not know how many children face disabilities and of what kind. Small, survey-based data gives estimates, but is not good enough to ensure all children with disabilities are identified.

In fact, the Punjab Special Education Policy (SEP) and IES both recognize the absence of consistent and comprehensive data on children with SEND, particularly in a form that is suitable to inform planning and policy. They also note that there are large variations in the estimates of the number of children with SEND depending on methodology, sources of evidence and definitions, and no reliable data on trends, as well as evidence of significant differences in prevalence rates in different parts of the province.

It is important to draw a distinction between data on the prevalence of SEND in the population which requires survey data to be collected from households and captures Out of School Children (OOSC), and data on children with SEND who are in school, for whom data can be collected through schools. Incorporation of reliable and simply worded questions on disability, as part of wider household surveys and national census, can provide invaluable insights regarding interactions between disability and other factors, e.g., gender, access to education and socio-economic background. Such data can become the foundation for effective policy design.

Moreover, disability data is often under-reported. This limits an accurate analysis of educational attainment and particular learning needs of children with SEND. The wide variations in methodologies yield deviations in data results which remains a challenge for policymakers and leads to difficulty in identifying potential beneficiary children according to their disability classification and in allocation of resources.

Table 1: Various data sets on disabilities for Pakistan

Source	Population	Scope
1998 Census	3.2 million (2.54%)	Census included intellectual, mental and physical impairment
2011 National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER)	2.27 million (1.7%)	Data collected through door-to-door surveys in 27 million households
2011 Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund	16 million (12%)	Data collected from 23 UCs in 7 districts comprising 78939 households.
World Report on Disability 2011 by WHO	17.8 million (13.4%)	Based on prevalence from World Health Survey 2002-2004.
2012 Study by Helping Hands for Relief and Development	5 million (2.65%)	Projections from the 1998 census across 199 districts from all 4 provinces
Moving from the Margins 2014. British Council Report	27 million (15%)	Projections using 15 percent global population of persons with disabilities
Population Census 2017, Government of Pakistan	Nearly 1 million (0.48%)	Registrations from the 6 th Population and Housing Census*
MICS 2018, Government of the Punjab	17.9%	Punjab-based Survey –Data collected from 35,482 children with functional difficulties between the ages of 5-17.

One positive development is the National Social Economic Registry (NSER) that now collates information on the exact nature and extent of disabilities amongst the disabled population. The NSER conducted a door-to-door survey which suggested a disability prevalence rate of 1.7%*. The survey, compiled in 2011, comprised 27 million wherein only 2.27 million people out of the 133 million respondents had a disability*. The NSER is now being updated. This door-to-door survey can be used to target number of PWDs, take account of their socio-economic status and the changes to help design new programs.

Bringing Change: Punjab's new Inclusive Education Strategy and Special Education Policy

Evidence, from around the world, suggests that children with disabilities should not be isolated in separate institutions but be integrated in mainstream schools as this is better for all children. Children with severe challenges may need support from separate institutions, but for children with mild or moderate difficulties, being in mainstream schools is important.

Till 2018, education policy in Punjab was predominantly focused on increasing enrolment and improving education quality. There has been a lack of any officially defined framework for classifying, identifying, measuring and developing responses to meet the needs of children with SEND across the whole educational system. Lack of a specific policy on special and inclusive education (and of targets similar to those set under Punjab's education roadmap) significantly restricted the extent to which children with SEND could be effectively served by mainstream schools. School Education Department (SED) played a limited role in addressing the needs of children with SEND, while Special Education Department's focused on children with only profound/severe disabilities

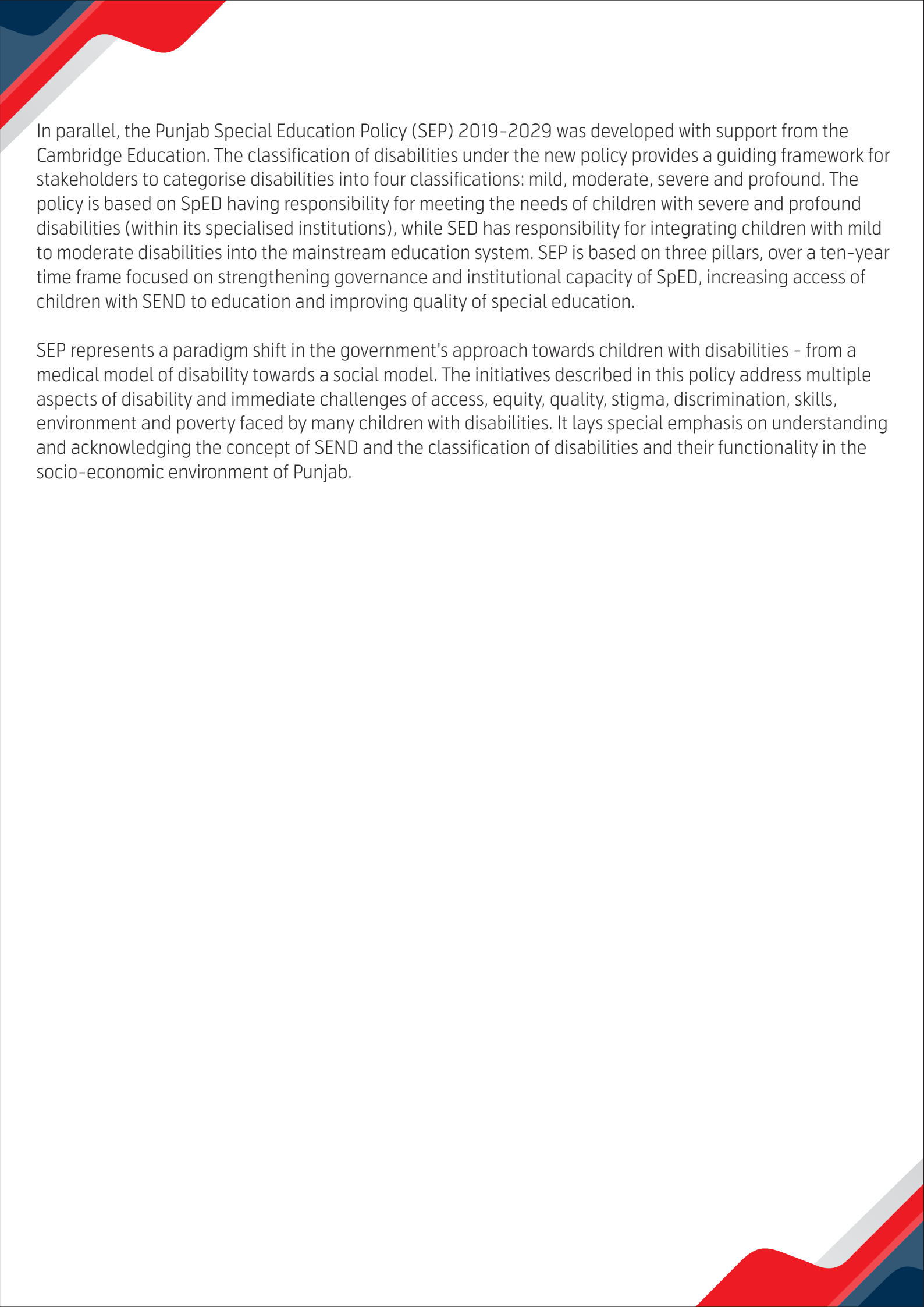
* The complete results of the census are not yet available. Summary results can be found on the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics website: <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/block-wise-provisional-summary-results-6th-population-housing-census-2017-january-03-2018>

* UNICEF. 2016. Population of Pakistan: an analysis of NSER 2010-11 (page 11)

* Disability related to lower limb was the most prevalent (0.7%), whereas hearing disability was least prevalent (0.1%). The prevalence of other forms of disability is as follows: vision (0.3%), speech (0.2%), mentally retarded (0.3%) and upper limb (0.2%). In terms of distribution of disability, out of total disabled population, 40.7% had lower limb related disability, 18.2% mentally retarded, 15.9% suffered from vision related disability, 10.8% had upper limb, 8.8% had speech and 5.6% had hearing disability.

As part of the Punjab Education Sector Programme II (PESP2), an Inclusive Education Strategy (IES) and Special Education Policy (SEP) have been formulated for the first time which clearly defines SED's responsibility for children with mild and moderate SEND and SpED's responsibility for children with severe & profound disabilities. These new documents set out a comprehensive policy framework combined with implementation plans.

The Inclusive Education Strategy (IES - 2019-2024) was developed with support from FCDO through a consultative process and specifically focuses on "children with mild to moderate disabilities as per the international classification of functional disabilities and the Washington Group/UNICEF module of child functioning.". Implementation of the IES is based around eight thematic strategies that focus on positioning SED as a thought leader on inclusive education, developing child-centred learning environment, developing an Inclusive Curriculum strategy (led by PCTB), Teacher's Professional Development strategy (led by QAED), Inclusive Assessment strategy (led by PEC), Inclusive Education Technology (led by PITB), Private Sector Engagement Strategy (spearheaded by SED in collaboration with PEF) and a complete database of school-going children with disabilities (in collaboration with PMIU).



In parallel, the Punjab Special Education Policy (SEP) 2019-2029 was developed with support from the Cambridge Education. The classification of disabilities under the new policy provides a guiding framework for stakeholders to categorise disabilities into four classifications: mild, moderate, severe and profound. The policy is based on SpED having responsibility for meeting the needs of children with severe and profound disabilities (within its specialised institutions), while SED has responsibility for integrating children with mild to moderate disabilities into the mainstream education system. SEP is based on three pillars, over a ten-year time frame focused on strengthening governance and institutional capacity of SpED, increasing access of children with SEND to education and improving quality of special education.

SEP represents a paradigm shift in the government's approach towards children with disabilities - from a medical model of disability towards a social model. The initiatives described in this policy address multiple aspects of disability and immediate challenges of access, equity, quality, stigma, discrimination, skills, environment and poverty faced by many children with disabilities. It lays special emphasis on understanding and acknowledging the concept of SEND and the classification of disabilities and their functionality in the socio-economic environment of Punjab.

**This evaluation of PESP2, being implemented by the
Government of Punjab,
is being carried out by OPM under
e-Pact, in partnership with IDEAS and CDPR.**

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