



Pakistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 14 July 2011

Information on discrimination against the female child, particularly in terms of access to education.

An undated document published on the *UNESCO* website states:

“Official statistics released by the Federal Education Ministry of Pakistan give a desperate picture of education for all, especially for girls. The overall literacy rate is 46 per cent, while only 26 per cent of girls are literate. Independent sources and educational experts, however, are sceptical. They place the overall literacy rate at 26 per cent and the rate for girls and women at 12 per cent, contending that the higher figures include people who can handle little more than a signature. There are 163,000 primary schools in Pakistan, of which merely 40,000 cater to girls. Of these, 15,000 are in Punjab Province, 13,000 in Sind, 8,000 in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and 4,000 in Baluchistan. Similarly, out of a total 14,000 lower secondary schools and 10,000 higher secondary schools, 5,000 and 3,000 respectively are for girls, in the same decreasing proportions as above in the four provinces. There are around 250 girls colleges, and two medical colleges for women in the public sector of 125 districts. Some 7 million girls under 10 go to primary schools, 5.4 million between 10 and 14 attend lower secondary school, and 3 million go to higher secondary schools. About 1.5 million and 0.5 million girls respectively go to higher secondary schools/colleges and universities.” (UNESCO (undated) *Alarming situation of education in Pakistan*)

In a paragraph headed “Alarming situation in rural areas” this document states:

“The situation is especially alarming in rural areas due to social and cultural obstacles. One of the most deplorable aspects is that in some places, particularly northern tribal areas, the education of girls is strictly prohibited on religious grounds. This is a gross misinterpretation of Islam, the dominant religion in Pakistan (96 per cent of the population), which like all religions urges men and women to acquire education. The situation is the most critical in NWFP and Baluchistan, where the female literacy rate stands between 3 per cent and 8 per cent.” (ibid)

The 2011 *United States Department of State* country report on Pakistan, in a section titled “Children”, states:

“Slightly more than 50 percent of the population over the age of 10 is literate. More than 40 percent of girls never enroll in school. This was often perceived as parental lack of desire to send girls to school; however, a 2009 survey indicated that only 6 percent of the population was in favor of banning girls' education. The biggest barrier to girls' education is the lack of access. Public schools, particularly beyond the primary grades, were not available in many rural areas, and those that existed were often too far away for a girl to travel unaccompanied. In addition, despite cultural beliefs that boys and girls should be separate after primary school, the government often failed to take measures to provide separate restroom facilities or separate classrooms, and there were more government schools for boys than for girls. The

attendance rates for girls in primary, secondary, and postsecondary schools were lower than boys across the board.” (United States Department of State (8 April 2011) *2010 Human Rights Report: Pakistan*)

This section of the report also states:

“On February 3, extremists in KP bombed a girls' school, which had just been rebuilt after a previous attack. Four students were killed, and more than 60 were injured. On November 21, Geo News reported that extremists bombed a government-run girls' primary school in KP.” (ibid)

An *IRIN News* report states:

“In 2008 and the first few months of 2009 at least 200 girls' schools were destroyed by militants.” (IRIN News (20 January 2010) *Pakistan: Militants still targeting schools in northwest*)

Chapter 6: “Children’s right to education” (in paragraph 6.1: “Attacks on schools prior to displacement”) of an *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* report states:

“Education – for both boys and girls – suffered when both the army and non-state armed groups targeted schools in different manners. Militants targeted girls' schools in certain areas. In addition, the army used some boys' schools as bases, leading to further attacks from militants. The climate of insecurity built up in part from these attacks may have contributed to the scale of the resulting displacement. In Swat, for example, attacks on schools were prevalent in the years leading up to the crisis. SPARC estimates that militants had destroyed over 200 schools in Swat by the end of 2008, of which 95 per cent were girls' schools. SPARC collected data indicating that attacks on schools took place in much of the conflict region, including in FATA, and they estimate that 50,000 students, the vast majority of whom were girls, were deprived of education as a consequence.” (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (May 2010) *Still at risk: Internally displaced children's rights in north-west Pakistan*, p.24)

An *Amnesty International* report, in a section titled “Targeting of Schools, Especially Schools For Girls”, states:

“The Taliban targeted schools teaching the national curriculum, and in particular, the few operating schools for women and girls both in the NWFP and FATA throughout 2008 and 2009.⁹⁹ According to statistics from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 165 schools were destroyed in NWFP and FATA in 2008, 136 of them girls' schools; and more than 180 schools were destroyed and 318 were partially destroyed in 2009.¹⁰⁰ In Darra Adam Khel, a Frontier Region, a 25-year-old man told Amnesty International in late 2008 that the Taliban had warned parents not to send their girls to school and later attacked the schools:

First they warned owners of private schools to end co-education. Then they told the government's girls' schools to close. When they refused, the Taliban bombed several of them and the rest of the schools were closed for fear of bombing. At the same time, parents also stopped sending their children to schools for fear of the Taliban.” (Amnesty International (10 June 2010) *'As if Hell Fell on Me': The Human Rights Crisis in Northwest Pakistan*, p.42)

This section of the report also states:

"In early 2008, threatening letters were left at the Girls Degree College in Jamrud, located in FATA's Bajaur Agency, demanding that girls wear veils to school. Then, in April 2008, a group of around twelve unidentified armed men came to the school at night, overpowered the watchmen, and planted explosives which they then detonated. According to Khalid Mumtaz Kundi, an official of the Khyber Agency political administration, four blasts damaged the school's wall, a classroom, and windowpanes of several rooms. A 58-year-old man with several children from Bajaur who was interviewed in late 2008 said that a primary school for girls existed near his home but there were no teachers available due to their fear of the Taliban:

The school has been closed for the last several months because there are no staff to run the school...It was open for one month when the children started going to school, but due to the fear of the Taliban all the teachers stopped coming and the school remains closed." (ibid, p.42)

An article published in the *South Asia Intelligence Review* states:

"Unsurprisingly, TTP militants have targeted schools across KP and FATA. An October 6 Dawn report quoted official sources as saying that 700 schools, most of them for girls, were targeted and damaged in different parts of KP over the past two years. Militants destroyed some 400 schools in the Swat Valley alone. In the latest of a series of such attacks, unidentified militants blew up a girls' primary school at Mashokhel and a boys' primary school at Shaikhan villages of Peshawar in the night of October 8, 2010. Media reports also indicate that at least 240 schools were destroyed during this period in the three agencies of FATA – Bajaur Agency (98), Khyber Agency (86) and Mohmand Agency (56). In a single series of such incidents, on October 9, 2010, unidentified militants blew up three Government-run schools in the Safi tehsil of Mohmand Agency (FATA)." (South Asia Intelligence Review (18 October 2010) *An Education in Terror*)

This article also states:

"Such is the fear that at least 205 primary schools for girls have shut down in different parts of KP, sources in the Elementary and Secondary Education (E&SE) department told Dawn: "Most of the closed schools are in the militancy-hit Districts, Frontier Regions (FR) and the areas located adjacent to the tribal belt." The schools that have been closed down include 21 in Peshawar, 36 in Thor Ghar, 54 in Swat, 16 in Bannu, 56 in Shangla, 16 in Hangu, five in Dera Ismail Khan and one in Kohat. The closure of these schools has deprived thousands of girl students of education. The militants have openly declared themselves to be against the education of girls. In a campaign led by Maulana Fazlullah, the Swat TTP chief, the TTP exhorted people to stop sending their daughters to schools, which 'inculcate Western values'. Hundreds of girls and women teachers quit schools as a result. The TTP Swat chapter, on December 25, 2008, ordered the closure of all girls' schools in the District and warned parents and teachers of dire consequences if the ban was flouted. In an announcement made in mosques and broadcast over their illegal radio FM channels (popularly known as 'Radio Mullah') the militants set a deadline of January 15, 2009, for its order to be obeyed, failing which they would blow up school buildings and attack schoolgirls. 'Female education is against Islamic teachings and spreads vulgarity in society,' Shah Dauran, second in command of TTP's Swat Chapter, declared. Unsurprisingly, some 400 private schools in Swat announced the termination of girls' education in their institutions, depriving more than 40,000 students of this basic right. Moreover, 84,248 girl students of State-run schools also

faced difficulty in attending schools due to the fear of attack, despite attempts by the local administration to keep the system running.” (ibid)

A *BBC News* report states:

“Earlier this year, Kanju Chowk Elementary School in Swat was targeted by Taliban militants simply because the teachers are women and the pupils are girls. The head teacher, Parveen Begum, gives us a tour of what they left behind. She covers most of her face with a white shawl, and treads carefully over the debris in beaded leather slippers. ‘This used to be the classroom for our very youngest pupils,’ she says, as we look into a room of mangled chairs and desks, littered with shredded exercise books. ‘All the girls cried when they saw what the militants had done to it.’ Parveen says that when the Taliban took control of Swat, she started receiving threatening letters. ‘They said if we didn’t close the school they would blow it up with all of us in it,’ she says. ‘We were scared, but we stayed open.’ Then a group of Taliban militants visited Parveen at the school in person. ‘They told us we could stay open if we all wore burkas, even the little girls,’ she says. ‘We did that, but they blew the place up anyway.’ More than 300 schools in Swat were damaged in this way.” (BBC News (15 October 2009) *Defying the Taliban to get an education*)

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report states:

“A girls school has been blown up in Pakistan’s northern Khyber tribal district, officials have told RFE/RL’s Radio Mashaal. The girls’ elementary school was located in the Malak Dinkhel area of Bara, a region controlled by the militant group Lashkar-e-Islam until late 2009. Officials said the school was blown up overnight on August 24. The Agency Education Office in the Khyber tribal district said a total of 18 government schools have been destroyed in the area since early 2009. The recent incident is the second so far this week, officials added. Bara is located some 15 kilometers southwest of Peshawar, capital of the nearby Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (26 August 2010) *Girls School Blown Up In Northern Pakistan*)

A *Central Asia Online* report, in a paragraph headed “Many schools bombed”, states:

“Militants have bombed at least 12 schools, especially those for females, in Peshawar, Nowshera and Charsadda this year. In many cases, educators have made makeshift arrangements to accommodate affected students in nearby buildings, but many have abandoned their studies because of threats or the distance to alternate schools. Police have arrested about 50 suspects in connection with the gang involved in bombing schools in Nowshera. They also busted another major gang in Peshawar, killing its leader in March. “The main ring that was involved in bombing schools was being headed by Haq Nawaz. He was killed last month, and after that no major incident has occurred in Peshawar,” Senior Superintendent of Police Operations Peshawar, Ijaz Ahmad, told Central Asia Online. However, such incidents occurred in the nearby semi-tribal area Darra Adamkhel, Nowshera and other areas.” (Central Asia Online (21 April 2011) *KP girls determined to complete education*)

A *Pakistan News* article states:

“Over 792 government schools for boys and girls throughout Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) are non-functional, a report compiled by the provincial education department said. Schools have not just been

closed down because of militancy, but also because of unavailability of qualified teachers, the education department's annual report for the previous year said. According to the report, which was submitted before the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly earlier this month, the number of primary and middle schools closed down across the province is 252 while 542 of them are closed in Fata. 'Teachers are not willing to work in far-flung tribal areas because of the uncertain security situation,' an official of the Fata Secretariat told The Express Tribune. Government presence, which was already thin in Fata's education sector, was further eroded by militants. According to the official, militants had destroyed 419 government schools in Fata over the years. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the situation is worse. 'Since 2007, more than 940 schools for girls and boys were completely or partially destroyed by militants in the province,' says provincial education minister Sardar Hussain Babak, who belongs to the ruling Awami National Party. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was also among the areas worst hit by the 2010 floods. "In all, 1,900 schools have been destroyed because of militancy and floods," Babak says." (Pakistan News (5 January 2011) *The woeful state of education in K-P, FATA*)

An Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre report states:

"Children who had recently returned home after being displaced from Orakzai Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas have been forced to study in tents after 68 schools were destroyed by militants or air strikes. One-third of the pupils missed their annual secondary-school exam, with the government failing to provide alternative facilities for those without secure access. Schools in some parts of the agency are still closed due to military operations. Girls and female teachers have been prevented from going to school, even in areas with less visible militant presence." (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (31 March 2011) *Pakistan: Internally displaced children miss education in tribal areas*)

A UNESCO report states:

"In the Swat District in North West Frontier Province (NWFP), 172 schools were destroyed or damaged between 2007 and March 2009 as the Taliban fought and eventually took control of the area. Most were burnt down by Taliban militants; others were shelled, blasted, demolished or ransacked, leaving 108 schools fully destroyed and 64 schools partially damaged. The action deprived 23,000 girls and 17,000 boys of their education. More schools were closed due to occupation by Taliban groups or by security forces, or because female teachers were being threatened. In August 2009, by which time the army had regained control of the Swat Valley but was still fighting the Taliban in pockets of the district and surrounding area, NWFP education minister Qazi Asad claimed that 356 schools had been damaged by the Taliban." (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (10 February 2010) *Education under Attack 2010 – Pakistan*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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