

Governance Situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Fulfilment of SDGs: A Critical Analysis and Way Forward

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Abstract:

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by over 150 world leaders at the United Nations Summit in 2015, substantial progress has been made in aligning national strategies with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Pakistan, as a pioneer in endorsing and integrating SDGs into its National Development Agenda, has established a comprehensive framework for implementation. Specifically, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has developed legislative, institutional, and policy mechanisms to support SDGs localization. This includes setting up an SDGs Support Unit, creating district-level localization plans, and establishing advisory committees. However, challenges persist, including gaps in data collection, limited human resource capacity, and insufficient integration of SDGs at the district level. To address these issues, improved coordination, enhanced data reporting, and better alignment of policies and investment strategies with SDG priorities are essential. Strengthening these areas will be crucial for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan to effectively achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Key words:

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Data Reporting, Localization, Policy Integration

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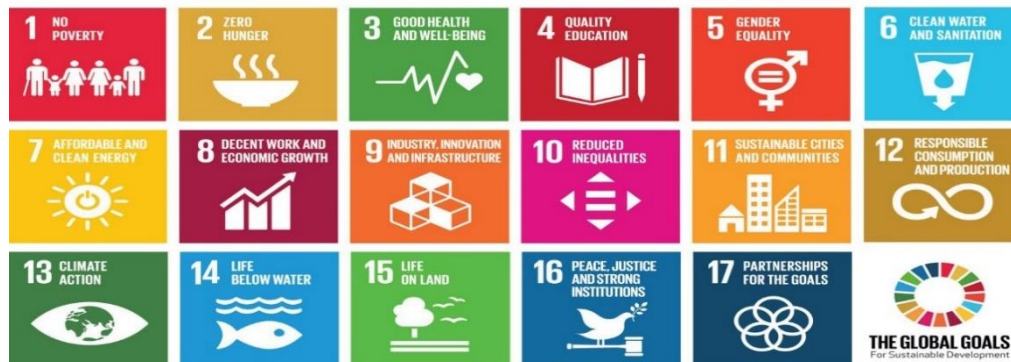
Introduction

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, more than 150 world leaders adopted the new 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development. World leaders came up with a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Fig-1) linking the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The SDGs have come into action since the beginning of 2016 and will continue till 2030. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will support governments around the world in tackling the new agenda and taking it forward over the next 15 years. The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. The SDGs aim to leave no one behind and achieve decent lives for all on a healthy planet³.

To provide legislative and institutional support for achieving SDGs, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province enacted 96 acts and framed over 36 sectoral policies since 2016. Despite the legislative, institutional and policy support there is much gap in data collection and reporting thereby the government is unable to track actual progress towards achieving 2030 agenda.

Improved coordination, alignment of policies with SDGs framework, data reporting and effective monitoring and investment in corresponding sectors of SDGs through Annual Development Programme can help in achieving the 2030 SDGs agenda.

Fig-1: 17 SDGs



Problem Statement

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals adopted by the UN in 2015 to achieve a more prosperous world. The SDGs aim to achieve shared prosperity, reduce economic disparity, create a cleaner environment, control climate change, and improve governance. The Government of

³ (UN Sustainable Development Group, n.d.)

Pakistan adopted the SDGs as its development agenda in 2016 through a unanimous parliamentary resolution. The provinces, following the federation and in the wake of the eighteenth constitutional amendment, have also taken several steps to achieve SDG targets and set a development direction for the next 15 years.

One of the key lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000-2015) was the lack of localization or a more top-down approach for achieving the goals. Business-as-usual may also not work for achieving the SDGs. This is evident from Pakistan's overall score of 57.7% on the SDG Index Ranking 2021, which places Pakistan 129th out of 165 nations. This standing requires substantial steps to embed the SDGs in the overall governance structure.

This research will critically analyze the governance initiatives taken at the institutional level and in development planning, along with considering budgetary processes for achieving the SDGs. In addition to this primary question, the research will be driven by the following key questions for an in-depth understanding and to arrive at informed conclusions and effective ways forward.

Research Questions

1. What are the governance mechanisms in place that can help achieve the SDGs?
2. What changes can be made to ensure that the SDGs are embedded at different tiers of governance?
3. How can institutional mechanisms, planning processes, or procedural setups be effective in the overall aim of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals?

Scope of the Study

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has adopted the SDGs as its provincial agenda. In addition to this, the provincial government has been regularly developing strategic documents to guide the development process and achieve a more prosperous and equitable province. This study conducts an in-depth analysis of the SDGs and the governance, planning, and institutional mechanisms established to achieve them. The study is pivotal in identifying the course toward the achievement of the SDGs by 2030 and provides key recommendations for course correction.

Research methodology

Qualitative data have been collected from online literature available on the subject matter, essentially making it secondary research. The data have been analyzed through analysis tools such as situational analysis, stakeholder analysis, and PESTEL analysis. This research will address two questions:

1. What are the bottlenecks in the effective management of floods in Pakistan?
2. In what ways can Pakistan's response to flood-related disasters improve?

Qualitative Research

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the governance structure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A review of the existing governance setup was conducted, followed by an examination of its planning and institutional structure. A detailed analysis of the roles and responsibilities of the institutions was performed, identifying loopholes, overlaps, and their terms of reference (TORs).

Data Collection

Secondary data has been collected through visits to relevant departments. While a substantial amount of data is available with the departments, it is not reported regularly or properly. For key informant interviews, visits to relevant government departments were conducted, including the departments of Planning and Development, Education, Health, Environment, and Home. To capture political will, visits to the Provincial Assembly were also made to investigate the awareness and ownership of the SDGs at the legislative level.

Governance Tools for SDGs Implementation

Several governance tools can be used to measure the implementation of SDGs. First, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Sustainable Development Strategies (SDS) were analyzed. SDS is a long-term plan developed by the government to integrate sustainable development into its policies, plans, and programs. It provides a framework for coordination, prioritization, and implementation of the SDGs. The Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) are another tool used to measure the implementation of SDGs. VNRs are reports submitted by countries to the United Nations to share their progress and challenges in implementing the SDGs. Achieving the SDGs requires partnerships, as multi-stakeholder partnerships bring together different stakeholders, including governments,

civil society organizations, the private sector, and academia, to collaborate and leverage resources toward the achievement of the SDGs.

SDG Monitoring, Data, and Reporting

Budgeting and financing mechanisms were used to analyze resource allocation toward the implementation of the SDGs. These include fiscal policies, public-private partnerships, and innovative financing mechanisms that mobilize and channel resources toward sustainable development. Expenditure tracking of the Government of KP's resources was carried out through the collection of data from the Finance Department and Planning Department to map expenditures against relevant SDGs.

Literature Review

The SDGs are successors to both the MDGs and the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. They aim to provide a universal agenda for "people, planet, and prosperity." The global SDGs framework adopted by the UN member states consists of 17 Goals to achieve, 169 targets to gauge progress, and 244 indicators to monitor and report on progress. However, SDGs are deeply interconnected and interdependent. Lack of progress on one SDG can derail progress on others. For instance, poverty (SDG-1) can lead to high malnutrition prevalence (SDG-2), which in turn leads to health issues (SDG-3) that may hamper access to quality education (SDG-4). Illiteracy can lead to unemployment (SDG-8), and the list goes on. While the SDGs are highly ambitious, achieving them by 2030 is essential for a better, peaceful, and prosperous future.

In summary, the 2030 Agenda with its 17 interwoven Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to provide a comprehensive and all-encompassing framework that all UN member states have pledged to achieve. In contrast to previous development agendas that mostly focused on economic growth, the SDGs are a universal framework comprising many policy goals in the economic, social, governance, and environmental spheres.

National Priorities

Pakistan was the first country to adopt the SDGs, with its firm commitment coming in 2016 when the National Assembly passed a unanimous resolution to adopt the 2030 Agenda as the "National Development Agenda." Since then, Pakistan has made significant progress toward mainstreaming the SDGs in national plans, policies, and strategies, including the Five-Year Plan, Vision 2025, provincial mid- and long-term growth strategies, and the country's long-term development perspective. The synchronization between Pakistan Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda reflects Pakistan's strong resolve to achieve the SDGs. Following the adoption of the SDGs as national development goals,

national and provincial parliamentary task forces on the SDGs were established in 2016 to ensure political ownership of the SDGs.

To institutionalize the SDGs, the Federal Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives (MoPD&SI) and provincial planning and development departments, with the support of UNDP, launched a Five-Year Joint Project, the “National Initiative for Sustainable Development Goals,” in 2016. Under this project, seven SDGs Support Units have been established in all provinces and regions to improve vertical and horizontal coordination among all stakeholders.

To practically pursue its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, Pakistan designed and approved a detailed National SDGs Framework. The Framework was approved by the National Economic Council (NEC). Under the Framework, a baseline on SDG indicators was established, and targets on indicators were set to feed into the SDG Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. In line with the National Framework, all provinces and regions have developed their respective frameworks, identifying and prioritizing local needs. The SDGs Frameworks (National/Provincial/Regional) are practical steps toward localizing the SDGs at national and sub-national levels and are useful tools considering the local context, needs, and priorities. Detailed prioritization and target-setting exercises have been undertaken during the framework. Of the 76 SDG targets prioritized in the national SDGs, 25 are of high priority.

Provincial Priorities

Under the national initiative for mainstreaming the SDGs and as part of the SDGs localization process, the SDGs Support Unit was established in the Planning and Development Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with UNDP in 2018. However, the institutionalization of SDGs localization in the province began before the formal establishment of the SDGs Unit by changing the nomenclature of the Special Development Unit to the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) in 2016. The SDU was mandated to pursue the 2030 Agenda and align with the resolution of the National Assembly of Pakistan adopted in 2016.

The SDGs Support Unit is mandated to work in close coordination with provincial and federal technical committees, provincial line departments, UN agencies, and civil societies to mainstream the SDGs in local development plans and strategies, strengthen coordination, reporting, and monitoring mechanisms, align financing flows with the 2030 Agenda, and support integrated and innovative approaches to accelerate progress on SDGs in priority areas.

Given the wide scope of mainstreaming the SDGs within government planning and implementation, and to guide development processes, the

province has developed its SDGs Framework. This framework includes a baseline on SDG indicators, identification and prioritization of provincially relevant SDG targets (high, medium, and low), and the setting of targets (short, medium, and long-term). To further ensure informed decisions, policy formulation, and optimal resource allocation, the province has also developed toolkits, including the District SDGs Scorecard, SDGs Localization Plans for districts, and SDGs-Oriented Supplementary Annexures for PC-1, to localize the SDGs at the district level and further down to sector levels. The Provincial Mid-Term Development Strategy, i.e., Sustainable Development Strategy (2019-23), and the corresponding five sectoral plans have also been aligned with the SDGs.

To translate plans and policies into actions, the provincial government has initiated over 200 high-impact projects aimed at improving service delivery, living standards, economic growth, environmental sustainability, reducing regional disparities, and promoting good governance. Similarly, the provincial government has enacted and adopted 92 pieces of legislation across all sectors since 2018, with the aim of leaving no one behind.

Strategic Documents and Analysis

Strategic planning in the public sector is crucial for promoting good governance by focusing on the efficient utilization of resources, quantification, and measurement of performance, which ultimately improves transparency and accountability in government operations. Since 2010, the province has adopted a novel approach of developing Mid-Term Development Strategies to guide public sector operations, becoming a pioneer in introducing strategic planning. The ultimate objective of all these Strategic Plans, including the Comprehensive Development Strategy 2010-14, Integrated Development Strategy 2014-18, and Sustainable Development Strategy 2019-23, is to pave the path for sustainable development in the province.

Sustainable Development Strategy (2019-23)

The Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) was developed and approved in 2019 after its predecessor, the Integrated Development Strategy, phased out in 2018. SDS is a planning instrument used by the provincial government to guide and steer strategic planning and budgeting.

The strategic context of SDS focuses on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, positioning its objectives, sector plans, and milestones to align with the SDGs and relevant targets to ensure that institutional reforms and public sector investments contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. The strategic objectives of SDS also emphasize aligning the outcomes of the strategy with the SDGs. All nine thematic areas of SDS are aligned with the

SDGs. The SDS-linked five sectoral plans have also been aligned with the SDGs.

SDGs Framework Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

To strengthen the SDGs localization and operationalization, a detailed Provincial SDGs Framework focusing on baseline establishment, target setting, and shortlisting of provincial priority SDGs targets has been developed. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the first province to approve this framework from the provincial cabinet. According to the framework, 111 SDG targets and 171 corresponding indicators are relevant to the KP province. The prioritization exercise indicates that of the 111 locally relevant SDG targets, 65 of high priority require immediate focus and resource allocation. The framework also recommends and outlines a detailed implementation and monitoring mechanism to institutionalize, monitor, and subsequently achieve the SDGs.

Azm-e-Nau (Economic Recovery Plan): COVID-19 Response

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was among the worst-hit provinces by the COVID-19 pandemic

Analysis

Situational Analysis

The Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is pursuing Agenda 2030 in letter and spirit. Through various developmental initiatives, the provincial government has contributed to improvements in SDG indicators across the province. Out of 74 SDG indicators, the province of KP has recorded improvements on 46 indicators, progress was stalled on 3 indicators, and 23 indicators showed a decline. Improvements in the SDG indicators have been augmented and supplemented through the enactment and development of various legislations, acts, and policies over the past 7 years. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial assembly has developed 92 legislations/acts and 36 policies to achieve the SDGs in the province.

In addition, the Annual Development Programme for the last 7 years has been aligned with the SDGs, with the understanding that progress made on the ADP may automatically contribute to progress on the SDGs. The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has set the scene for province-specific SDGs by integrating them into provincial plans and policies and establishing various institutional and coordination mechanisms at strategic and operational levels. The Planning and Development Department, through a participatory and consultative approach involving all administrative departments and field formations, has developed a provincial SDG framework. Out of 169 targets, 111 have been prioritized by the provincial government and are spread across

all administrative departments to be achieved by 2030. For example, targets of Goal 3 have been interlinked with health and so on. To address developmental needs and their interlinkages with the SDGs, the provincial government has appointed departmental focal persons for SDGs in each administrative department. The table below highlights all 111 provincial targets and their associations with relevant departments.

Sectors/Department	Relevant SDGs Target
Agriculture	Targets 2.3, 2.4, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 14.4,15.1 and 15.3
Board of Revenue	Targets 1.4, 5.a and 17.1
Excise and Taxation	Targets 3.5, 9.1 and 17.1
Buildings	Targets 11.3 and 16.6
DWSS	Targets 1.4, 3.9, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.a, 6.b and 11.6
E&SE	Targets 1.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.a, 4.c
Energy & Power	Targets 1.4, 7.1 and 7.2
Environment	Targets 3.9, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 9.5, 11.4, 11.6, 12.4, 12.5, 12.b, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.7, 15.9, and 15.a
Finance	Targets 1.a, 1.b, 5.a, 8.10, 9.3, 9.a, 10.c and 16.6
Food	Targets 2.1 and 2.2
Forestry	Targets 3.9, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 9.5, 11.4, 11.6, 12.4, 12.5, 12.b, 13.1, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.7, 15.9 and 15.a
Health	Targets 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.a, 3.b, 3.c, 3. d
Higher Education	Targets 4.4 and 9.5
Home	Targets 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.9, 10.3, 11.7, 16.1, 16.2, 16.3 and 16.10
Housing	Targets 11.a and 11.1
Industries	Targets 4.4, 8.8, 9.2, 9.3, 9.b and 12.5
Information	Targets 5.b, 9.c, 16.6, 16.9 and 16.10
Labor	Targets 5.4, 8.3, 8.7, 8.8 and 10.4
Law and Justice	Targets 8.8, 16.3, 16.6 and 16.7

Sectors/Department	Relevant SDGs Target
Local Government	Targets 1.4, 3.5: 3.9: 3.b: 5.5: 6.1: 6.2: 6.3: 9.1: 11.6: 11.7: 12.4 and 12.5
Mines & Minerals	Targets 8.8 and 9.3
Multi Sectoral	Targets 1.3, 1.4, 2.4, 3.4, 3.7, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.a, 5.4, 6.1, 6.4, 8.3 and 8.6
Population Welfare	Targets 3.2, 3.7, 5.6 and 11.3
Relief and Rehabilitation	Targets 11.b, 13.1 and 13.3
Social Welfare	Targets 3.a, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.a, 8.5, 8.7, 10.4, 11.7, 16.1 and 16.2
Special Initiatives	Targets 1.1, 1.2 and 4. a
Sports Youth and Tourism	Targets 8.6, 8.9, 11.4 and 12. b
ST&IT	Targets 4.4 and 9. b
Transport	Targets 3.6, 9.1 and 11.2
Urban Development	Targets 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.7 and 11.a
Water Sector	Targets 2.3, 2.4, 6.4 6.5, 6.6, 7.2, 9.1 and 11. b
Roads	Targets 3.6, 9.1 and 11.2

The provincial government has also renamed the Special Development Unit of the Planning and Development Department as the Sustainable Development Unit, with an SDG mandate through a notification. Additionally, a dedicated SDGs Support Unit has been established within the Planning and Development Department, staffed to provide strategic and operational-level guidance and assistance to localize SDGs at provincial and sub-provincial levels. This involves aligning plans/policies and resource flows with SDGs and strengthening monitoring and reporting. The Unit has been jointly established by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the United Nations Development Program in compliance with the international commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The Unit aims to support the operationalization and localization of SDGs at the provincial level.

Implementation of SDGs demands coordinated efforts at all levels. To provide strategic and operational-level guidance and ensure integrated efforts for SDG implementation, the following coordination mechanisms at strategic and operational levels have been established:

- **Parliamentary Task Force:** This comprises Members of the Provincial Assembly and is divided into four thematic areas: Governance, Environmental, Social, and Economic clusters. The Task Force's function is to gain political support and deliberate on policy formulation and legislation, if required, to mainstream the SDGs at the provincial level.
- **Provincial SDGs Coordination Committee:** This committee has been notified in compliance with the decision of the NEC. Headed by the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with various Provincial Ministers as members, the committee oversees and steers the achievement of SDGs in the province through the implementation of the Provincial SDG Framework.
- **Provincial Advisory Committee on SDGs:** Headed by the Additional Chief Secretary, this committee includes administrative secretaries of leading departments, UNDP, and the Chief SDG Planning Commission of Pakistan. The committee deliberates and advises on policy formulation, data generation, SOPs, course correction, and institutional reforms required in pursuit of the SDGs.
- **Steering Committee:** Headed by the Secretary of Planning and Development, this committee includes line departments, UNDP, and the Planning Commission. Its mandate is to discuss and approve the Annual Work Plan of the Project.
- **Departmental Focal Person Coordination Committee:** Headed by the DG-SDU, this committee includes focal persons from all line departments. The purpose is to augment ownership and generate suggestions from line departments regarding the implementation of the SDGs at the departmental level.
- **Development Partners Coordination Committee:** Headed by the DG-SDU, this committee includes all leading development partners and donors working in the province. The objective is to strengthen coordination with partners to mainstream SDGs in their respective portfolios.
- **District Advisory Committee:** Headed by the Deputy Commissioner concerned, with district heads of all line departments as members, this committee aims to acquaint district field officers with how to align resources and mainstream SDGs at the district level.

The SDGs comprise 17 Goals, 169 Targets, and 244 Indicators. Such a comprehensive development agenda involves numerous interlinkages with different types of correlations. In most instances, these relationships are positive and mutually reinforcing. However, achieving economic growth through Goal 8 and Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) can increase carbon emissions and environmental degradation, which may impact targets related to the environment. Alongside this interconnected developmental framework, there are guiding themes/principles that connect and govern each aspect of the framework effectively.

The most important guiding principle or thematic area of the SDGs is the concept of localization. Each country must set its own targets against the SDG Targets/Indicators and prioritize the developmental agenda, considering its local context, constraints, and governance structure. Localization should extend beyond the national level to the provincial, district, and tehsil levels. Another key principle is "Leaving No One Behind and Reaching the Furthest Behind First," which ensures that policies address the most vulnerable first and that no one is left out of the development process. Additionally, there are five important Ps—People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership—that are woven around each SDG and Target. To achieve SDGs, strong institutions, as emphasized in Goal 16 (Peace and Justice), provide the governance mechanism for the entire development agenda.

Data Gap and Reporting

All SDGs are relevant for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, not all 169 Global Targets and 244 indicators are applicable to the province. Some indicators are global (17 indicators), and 41 indicators are national. About 9 indicators are repetitive under various goals.

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the SDGs Unit, in consultation with district officials, representatives of youth, women, academia, and marginalized communities, identified 111 targets and 171 indicators that were found to be relevant and appropriate for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The indicators were further classified according to administrative level—National, Provincial, and District—to assign responsibility for monitoring. The actual list of selected targets and indicators with baseline data is available.

Of the 171 indicators, baseline data is available for 102 indicators, leaving a data gap for 69 indicators. Establishing a data collection system at the provincial and district levels is fundamental to obtaining disaggregated data at the local level. As baseline data for several indicators remains unavailable, increased support is needed for strengthening data collection and building the capacity of line departments. Significant efforts are required by the relevant departments to fill data gaps and regularly collect and report data to feed into the SDGs national and global progress monitoring systems in the coming years, following the standard UNSTAT online guidelines. Among these indicators, even those with some form of data may require computational methods, and line departments have limited capacity to collect and report on these indicators. Additionally, the Bureau of Statistics (BOS) needs to formulate and introduce new, integrated survey methodologies focusing on environmental data/statistics in line with the Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics and other national and provincial surveys (PSLM, PDHS, MICS, etc.) to ensure reporting on indicators for which data is not currently available or generated regularly.

Baseline data for the 102 indicators was collected mainly from published official sources, considering the year 2014-15 as the baseline. Where baseline data was unavailable, other years closer to the baseline year were considered. For some indicators, baseline data was collected directly from departments or computed.

Following major official data sources at the national or provincial level were used for establishing the baseline for SDGs indicators:

- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Official Development Statistics
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa BOS Multi-Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS)
- Pakistan Economic Survey, Planning Commission
- Pakistan Standard of Living Measurement (PSLM) Survey
- Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS), National Institute of Population Studies
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II
- National Nutrition Survey
- Labour Force Survey
- Line Departments' data (e.g., Health and Education Departments)
- Data generated by international organizations/UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF, FAO)

Political Ownership

Pakistan Vision 2025 aims to reignite and sustain growth while considering equitable and environmental constraints. The goal is to improve living standards for every Pakistani, regardless of caste, creed, place of residence, or political or religious affiliation. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has adopted SDGs as its provincial agenda. Additionally, the provincial government has been regularly developing strategic documents to guide the development process and achieve a more prosperous and equitable province.

Expenditure Tracking

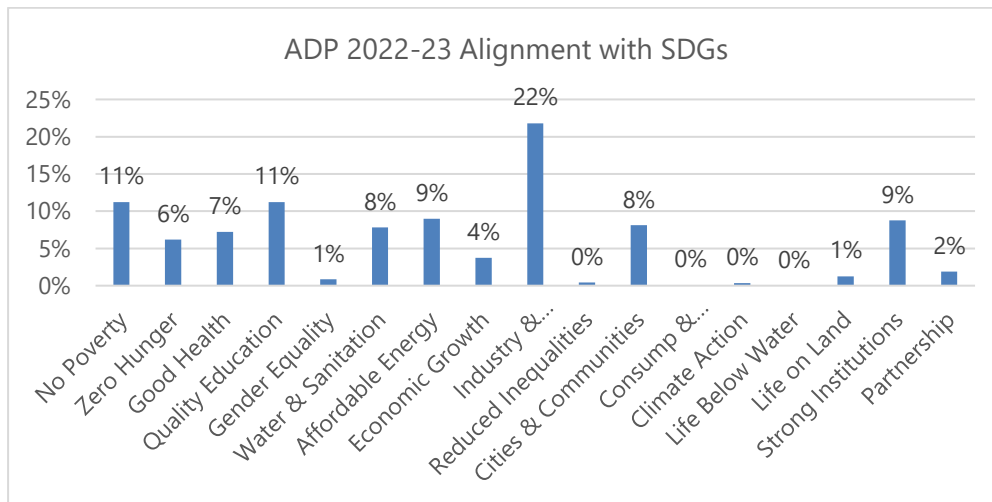
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a diverse province with varying landscapes, cultures, ethnicities, languages, and socio-economic profiles. The north is different from the south, not only in terrain but also in climate, culture, and natural resources. Therefore, it is important to uplift the entire province and address the needs of the furthest behind without discrimination. It is vital to build on the opportunities represented by each region to optimally use natural resources for effective poverty alleviation. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa developed a Medium-Term Development Framework for 2019-23—the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS)—which includes 7 thematic areas as development priorities: health, education, economic growth, energy, local governance and urban development, and agriculture, among others. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also prepared

an SDG Framework that aligns provincial priorities with Sustainable Development Goals.

With this agenda, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has continuously worked to uplift the entire province, allocating funds to regions, divisions, and sectors where they are most needed according to developed strategies. For example, the Merged Areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are the least developed districts in the province, with the highest number of poor people (73%), lowest literacy rates, highest child malnutrition (42% wasting), very low drinking water coverage, one of the highest population growth rates at 2.41%, and over 5 million people. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has made significant efforts to accelerate development in this region, as evidenced by the highest allocation of funds to these districts. In 2019-20 and 2020-21, 34% and 33% of the total local Annual Development Programme funds, respectively, were allocated to the Newly Merged Districts.

SDGs require investment and greater budget allocation to respective goals and targets. Especially, high-priority goals and targets need consistent and significant allocations to achieve the 2030 targets. It is essential to track government expenditure, identify loopholes, and address gaps.

The regular and development budget has been mapped against the SDG Targets and tracked according to the priorities set in the SDGs Framework.



The above graph shows different government allocations to the respective SDGs in 2022-23. From the graph, it can be seen that Goal-9, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, received the most funds. This indicates that the government is more focused on building infrastructure. Following Goal-9 is Goal-1, No Poverty, which receives the second highest allocation from the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with 11% of the total budget allocated

to it. Goal-4, Education, and Goal-3, Health, receive 11% and 7% of the total allocation, respectively.

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Issues & Challenges

- **Coordination:** Implementation of SDGs demands coordinated efforts at all levels. Though coordination mechanisms at strategic and operational levels have been established to provide guidance and ensure integrated efforts for the implementation of SDGs, the frequency of their meetings and level of interest do not reflect a priority for the subject.
- **Localization:** The most important guiding principle of the SDGs is the localization concept, which should extend beyond the national level to Provincial, District, and Tehsil levels. However, the capacity of lower-tier administrative setups poses a significant constraint to this concept.
- **Baseline Data:** Of the total 171 indicators, baseline data is available for 102 indicators, leaving a data gap of 69 indicators. Additionally, the baseline data for several indicators remains unavailable, and the existing data requires computational methods for collection and reporting. This situation calls for increased support for strengthening data collection and capacity building of line departments.
- **Budgetary Allocations:** The budgetary allocations and investments in SDGs are not at the desired level, which suggests that the 2030 agenda may not be fully met. Therefore, allocations, especially for high-priority goals and targets, need to be consistent and significant.
- **Tracking & Monitoring:** Existing investments towards achieving SDGs are neither properly tracked nor monitored, despite the efforts of the provincial finance and planning departments. Real-time tracking could assist policymakers in setting directions for investment in specific sectors.
- **Sectoral Plans:** Out of 74 SDG indicators, the province of KP has recorded improvements on 46 indicators, progress was stalled on 3 indicators, and 23 indicators showed a decline. This decline suggests that sectoral plans are not adequately aligned with the goal of achieving SDGs by 2030.
- **Methodologies:** The Bureau of Statistics (BOS) has still adopted conventional methods of data collection. There is an urgent need for BOS to formulate and introduce new, more integrated survey methodologies focusing on environmental data/statistics, in line with the Framework for

the Development of Environmental Statistics and other national and provincial surveys (PSLM, PDHS, MICS, etc.).

Conclusion

Pakistan has shown commendable commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by becoming the first country to endorse the SDGs in 2015 and subsequently adopting them as its National Development Agenda in 2016. Political ownership of the SDGs is key to the effective institutionalization of these goals at the national and sub-national levels. Pakistan was one of the few countries to establish a Parliamentary SDGs Secretariat based at the National Assembly. On the strategy and policy front, all seven pillars of Vision 2025 are fully aligned with the SDGs, providing a comprehensive long-term strategy for achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development. Localization of the SDGs at the sub-national level has been ensured through the establishment of SDGs support units across the country in all provinces and regions and the development of National and Provincial SDGs Frameworks.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an SDGs Support Unit has been established in the Planning and Development Department. The approved SDGs Framework for the province is also in place. Additionally, all provincial strategic policies, plans, and strategies have been aligned with the SDGs. To advance SDG localization to the district level, District SDGs Localization Plans for pilot districts have been developed, and coordination systems in the form of District SDGs Advisory Committees have been created in all districts. A resource tracking mechanism to map provincial government investments against SDG targets is being undertaken regularly. However, despite progress on legislative, policy, and institutional fronts, challenges such as data gaps for regular reporting on SDG indicators, limited human resource capacities for implementing the SDGs, the implementation of KP's high-priority SDGs, and integrating SDGs into sectoral plans, especially at the district level, continue to derail SDG achievement.

Recommendations

1. The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has established institutional, development, and planning mechanisms through the creation of the SDG Support Unit and various committees that can advance the SDG agenda. The government needs to harness the potential of these mechanisms and improve coordination among them to achieve the SDGs.
2. A bottom-up approach is key to achieving the SDGs, as it was the missing link in achieving the MDGs. The government should ensure that district-

level governance committees and mechanisms are strengthened to improve service delivery and ultimately achieve the SDGs at the district level.

3. For an effective reporting mechanism, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa needs to strengthen its statistical institutions. Specific attention must be given to the administrative data generated by government departments, focusing on its reliability, accumulation, and reporting.
4. The Annual Development Programme (ADP) should be refined and reorganized to advance the priorities set in the SDG Framework. For instance, high-priority targets should receive funding on a priority basis. The ADP should be depoliticized, and allocations should be made according to these priorities.
5. The governance mechanisms in place, especially regarding the expenditure tracking mechanism, need to align with the priorities set in the SDG Framework. The Climate Change Financing Framework for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, developed by UNDP and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, can serve as a model for budgeting and tracking expenses at the SDG goal level and, preferably, at the SDG target level. This will provide a clear representation of provincial investments and allow for more efficient tracking of expenses.
6. Current sectoral plans do not sufficiently reflect the SDG agenda; therefore, the respective line departments should integrate the SDGs into their sectoral plans and prepare a policy action plan for the timely achievement of the SDGs.
7. The Bureau of Statistics (BOS) should formulate and introduce new and more integrated survey methodologies focusing on environmental data/statistics, in line with the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and other national and provincial surveys.

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