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Trends in Funding for Women's Economic Empowerment in Pakistan

Publish WhatYouFund

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Women's
Economic
Empowerment
Building evidence for
better investments

A study tracking funding for women's economic empowerment (WEE) (2015–20) in Pakistan has identified 1,674 projects supported by the federal and provincial governments. These had a combined expenditure of Rs.131,998.8 million.

Conducted by Omar Asghar Khan Foundation and commissioned by Publish What You Fund, "Assessing National Funding for Women's Economic Empowerment in Pakistan" also sought to track funding for women's financial inclusion (WFI) and women's empowerment collectives (WECs) over the period 2015–20. It also makes a series of recommendations for the government and civil society to improve the transparency of funding information and advance the women's economic empowerment agenda.

The study identified 1,674 projects through a key word search of the federal and four provincial budgets for seven financial years covering the period 2015–2020. It focused on the development component of the budget which provides details of projects/schemes that help identify support to WEE, WFI, or WECs. Each project was manually reviewed, and coded using guiding questions¹ adapted from Publish What You Fund's broader methodology and framework.

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is central to realising women's rights and gender equality. This study forms part of a broader programme aiming to improve understanding of who funds WEE, how, and with what results. It is hoped that the evidence generated by this work will help policymakers, funders, and gender advocates to support better funding approaches to advance women's economic empowerment. The findings of the study are even more important as Pakistan begins rehabilitation efforts following the devastating floods triggered by the monsoon rains in July 2022.

Key findings:

1. 100 projects targeted women's income-earning opportunities through employment, entrepreneurship & productive resource access. Forty-two of these projects provided vocational training with a total reported expenditure of Rs.2,523.7 million. Thirty-nine projects supported the business and other services sector, with a total reported expenditure of Rs.1,029.3 million.
2. Projects that targeted WEE through greater economic rights for women and girls included 27 projects providing support to women's rights organisations, movements, or government institutions, though all supported government Women's Development Departments, with a total expenditure of Rs.279.9 million. Another 15 projects targeted employment creation, with a total expenditure of Rs.217.4 million.
3. Of the projects that contributed to an enabling environment for WEE, 1,405 projects targeted education, with a cumulative expenditure of Rs.91,630 million. Eighty projects targeted health, mostly related to reproductive healthcare, with a total expenditure of Rs.33,640 million. Thirteen projects targeted gender based violence with a total expenditure of Rs.351.5 million, and ten projects targeted women's basic needs with a total expenditure of Rs.834.7 million.
4. The study found no government funds/projects that supported WFI and WECs, which in Pakistan are mainly supported by civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector, including commercial banks.

The findings of the study were used to develop the following recommendations that are intended to assist a broad range of stakeholders within government and civil society.

Entry points for engagement and advocacy to advance the WEE agenda

1. Promote gender responsive budgeting (GBR) at the federal and provincial levels.
2. Engage with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus at the federal and provincial levels.
3. Support the Women's Development, Social Welfare, and Planning and Development Departments at the provincial levels.
4. Engage a broad range of stakeholders to promote women's labour force participation.
5. Strengthen trade unions and support women's inclusion in them to protect their labour rights and interests.
6. Encourage private sector support for inclusive financial assistance and entrepreneurship.
7. Collaborate with women's rights organisations and CSOs.
8. Work with the media, including social media.

Improving transparency of information on government spending for WEE, WFI, and WECS

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2. Engage with the Women's Parliamentary Caucus at the federal and provincial levels.
3. Support the Women's Development, Social Welfare, and Planning and Development Departments at the provincial levels.
4. Engage a broad range of stakeholders to promote women's labour force participation.
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ABOUT THE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

In October 2020, Publish What You Fund embarked on a multi-year project to improve the transparency of funding towards women's economic empowerment (WEE), women's financial inclusion (WFI), women's empowerment collectives (WECs), and gender integration (GI).

The project has assessed national funding to WEE, WFI, and WECs in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Uganda. The project has also tracked international funding to WEE, WFI, and WECs as well as assessing which funders have a gender integration approach in Bangladesh, Kenya, and Nigeria.

The full report series is available [here](#).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report focuses on national funding to WEE, WFI, and WECs in Pakistan. It was commissioned by Publish What You Fund. The report is based on research produced by the Omar Asghar Khan Foundation who conducted the assessment of national and sub-national funding to WEE, WFI, and WECs in Pakistan. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions of Publish What You Fund.

ABOUT OMAR ASGHAR KHAN FOUNDATION

Established in 2000, the Omar Asghar Khan Foundation is a public advocacy organization helping build a state that is responsive to its citizens. Using democratic innovations like social accountability and budget analysis, the Foundation opens channels of citizen engagement to make governance responsive, increase trust in public institutions, and help people make a difference in their lives. The Foundation works across Pakistan, with its strongest field-base in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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