Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) was formed in 2005 in order to provide a platform to civil society through which they can address key issues on policy advocacy and bridge the gap between policy makers and the civil society. The organization was formed for the development and implementation of policy in context of free and quality education for all. PCE is legally registered as the Society for Access to Quality Education (SAQE) in 2010. PCE is a strong advocate of evidence-based policy advocacy, community awareness and mobilization.
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Pakistan Coalition for Education commemorated World Teachers’ Day in collaboration with Human Development Foundation at Bahria University, Islamabad. “Democratic values begin in the classroom with empowered teachers” was the highlight of the talk organized to discuss the importance of empowered teachers to build sustainable future for societies.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Azhar Saleem from the Human Development Foundation lauded the role played by the teachers in shaping the nation and stressed on giving the utmost respect to teachers for they are performing the most sacred duty. He further highlighted the importance of inspiring teachers who have the power to uplift the future of their students. His sentiments were echoed by Mr. Shaheer Ellahi, assistant professor at Bahria University, who reiterated the need to attach prestige to the profession. He lamented on the present relationship between a teacher and a student which has been trivialized by the changing nature of education that views students as products rather than individuals.

Ms. Nargis Sultana from Open Society Foundations addressed the audience about the need for policy focus on teachers which would enable them to be the empowered vessels that impart education based on critical thinking. For this to occur, she stressed on the need for empowering teachers at the grassroots level and to address the disparity prevalent in quality of education in public and private schools.

The discussants also expounded upon the issues of the role of teachers in inculcating democratic values. Ms. Zehra Arshad, National Coordinator of Pakistan Coalition for Education while speaking on the occasion underlined the privileged status of university students who make up for 6% of the country’s population. She encouraged the students voting for the first time in the upcoming election to vote for education by choosing those political parties who have placed education as a priority in their manifestos.

The discussion was followed by question and answer session from the students. At the conclusion of the event, the students in attendance applauded the efforts of their teachers and pledged to work to make education accessible to all.
Pakistan Coalition for Education met with other Asia Pacific Coalitions’ for education in Hanoi, Vietnam. The consultation was hosted by Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA) and organized by Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE). The regional platform helped bring together participants from 27 countries. The main objectives of the meeting are detailed below:

- Strengthen capacities of Asia Pacific coalitions in advocacy work towards SDG4/Education 2030 implementation and monitoring, within the wider SDG processes
- Share key updates and advocacy plans of Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and regional partners towards greater complementation and collaboration of advocacy work at all levels (global, regional and national)
- Strengthen coalition engagement with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) especially on improving local education groups, active engagement with CSO representatives at GPE Board to inform GPE agenda and processes, and active involvement in GPE replenishment campaign
- Discuss CSEF reporting, learning exchange processes, and future plans

The first day featured a get to know exercise followed by a plenary discussion on implementation of SDG4. The session was chaired by ASPBAE Secretary General, Maria Khan and focused on national education trends and challenges. The platform was used to highlight the different standards of education for the wealthy and the poor. The panelists underscored the various issues and challenges in education systems across the Asia Pacific such as shrinking spaces for civil society, privatization in education, decrease in diversity, inclusivity and democracy in public education.

Session 2 focused on the challenges and opportunities in advocating for equitable and inclusive education. VAEFA and Hanoi Association of the Deaf (HAD) discussed the coalition’s initiatives with regards to advocating for the right to education of the deaf. Representatives from Afghan National Education outlined the various challenges in access of education in war torn and conflict ridden regions. Suggestions were also made on how to involve government agencies in order to strategize the implementation of SDG4 and education processes in emergency situations.

Session 3 highlighted the challenges and opportunities in financing SDG4/Education 2030. Mr. Rene Raya from ASPBAE discussed the various trends and challenges to education financing. He went on to highlight the growth of private school enrolments in countries that aren’t spending enough on education. National Coordinator, Ms. Zehra Arshad presented PCE’s experience with regards to budget tracking, monitoring and advocacy in Pakistan. Ms. Zehra also a board member of GPE, detailed the various CSO2 mechanisms and opportunities for coalitions to engage and CSO feedback and consultation processes on GPE’s Advocacy and Social Accountability (ASA) and Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) funding mechanisms.
Earlier this year, PCE had submitted a parallel report to the UPR addressing the issue of human rights implications of dwindling finances and the resulting commercialization of education in Pakistan. The UPR is a mechanism of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) intended to complement, not duplicate, the work of other human rights mechanisms, including the UN human rights treaty bodies. This is the first international human rights mechanism to address all countries and all human rights. Each member state of the UN is periodically reviewed on the status of human rights every five years.

The ultimate goal of UPR is the improvement of the human rights situation in every country with significant consequences for people around the globe. The UPR is designed to prompt, support, and expand the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground. To achieve this, the UPR involves assessing States’ human rights records and addressing human rights violations wherever they occur. The UPR also aims to provide technical assistance to States and enhance their capacity to deal effectively with human rights challenges and to share best practices in the field of human rights among States and other stakeholders. The reviews are conducted by the UPR Working Group which consists of the 47 members of the Council; however, any UN Member State can take part in the discussion/dialogue with the reviewed States. The documents on which the states are reviewed are based on: 1) information provided by the State under review, which can take the form of a “national report”; 2) information contained in the reports of independent human rights experts and groups, known as the Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities; 3) information from other stakeholders including national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations (OHCHR 2018). PCE’s engagement in this reporting process fell under the information from non-governmental organizations. After submitting a joint report, which was endorsed by its members and partners earlier in March last year, the coalition has been engaged in advocacy of the report. In this regard PCE held meetings with the First Secretaries of targeted diplomatic missions in Pakistan. These include Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Denmark. Recommendations derived from the parallel UPR submission were shared with these missions as potential recommendations which the states can raise during the working group review in UPR. In addition to these meetings, the UPR submission report and the summary were also shared with the embassies of Japan, Sweden and France.

Later in October, a month before the review, the coalition also participated in the Pre-sessions of the UPR which was a good opportunity to reach out to the diplomats of other UN members in Geneva. During the Pre-sessions, the coalition presented its report to various missions which included Portugal, United States, Canada, Estonia, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, Italy, Norway and the Holy See amongst others. Meetings with the UN special rapporteurs on Right to Education as well as briefing to the Human Rights desk of the United Nations Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights were also held to highlight the issue. This space also proved to be a good connecting point with other Pakistani Civil Society Organizations to apprise them of the issue. One notable connection forged at this forum was cordial introduction with the National Commission for Human Rights, an independent state institute established to protect human rights in Pakistan.

The UPR of Pakistan occurred on 13th November, at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Several countries raised their concerns on Right to Education. Seven countries recommended Pakistan to ensure all children have access to quality education without any discrimination. Additional recommendations focused on increasing education budget to ensure education rights for all, especially girls. The final outcome report and adoption will take place in March this year.
On 20th November 2017, PCE held its Annual Members’ Meeting in Islamabad. The meeting was attended by members and partners from various districts and provinces across Pakistan. The meeting discussed advocacy initiatives taken so far and future plans with regards to enhancing sustainable education reforms at the grass root level.

In the first group-work session, members were divided into groups according to their provinces to discuss various initiatives with regards to education in their respective districts. Members shared their experiences, the challenges faced and the measures taken to overcome these challenges. One member from each group presented the findings for the rest of the group.

The second session addressed the various ways to make the coalition an effective platform at the provincial and district level. The secretariat also discussed the need for a Provincial Focal Organization with the attending members. The organization will be responsible for coordinating initiatives and programs on voluntary basis in the province. Members were also apprised about the “Member of the Year” initiative. Criteria for selection was discussed and unanimously agreed upon.

In the third session, members of the coalition shared updates about the ongoing initiatives taken by their organizations in their districts and how these efforts align with the Secretariat’s work. This helped identify the opportunities for collaboration and provision of technical assistance.

Members were divided into groups for another group-work session whereby the financing of education was discussed. A list of issues were prepared along with possible solutions and ways to mitigate these issues. Members were also encouraged to devise strategies for future engagements with the government to ensure increased education budget allocation and its effective allocation for their respective provinces.

The concluding session helped identify the communication gaps between the coalition and devised a strategy for all coalition members to highlight their efforts. PCE was able to position itself as the only coalition platform that is effectively advocating for education issues in the country while building upon each of its members’ strength.
PCE hosted its 8th National Conference on the theme of “Fund the Future: Let’s Make Education a Priority” from 21-22 November, 2017. The two day event was attended by members of the civil society, government functionaries, and members of academia, students and political party representatives who deliberated over the need to prioritize inclusive education in Pakistan. The convention featured multiple panel discussions taking into account various stakeholder perspectives from all over the country on themes of girls’ education and inclusive education.

The first session focused on achieving global goals through active local plans. Panelists from provincial education departments and international development partners discussed the success stories and challenges faced in the implementation of Education Sector Plans (ESP). The panelists included Khalid Khan, Special Secretary Education Elementary and Secondary Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Fauzia Khan, Head of Curriculum Wing Sindh, Mr. Qazi Zahoor Ul Haq, Chief Education Officer Punjab, Mr. Muhammad Farooq, Additional Secretary Education Balochistan, Mr. Javed Malik- DFID, and Mr. Irfan Ahmed Awan, Executive Director, Society for Community Strengthening and Promotion of Education, Balochistan (SCSP EB). The platform was used to emphasize the need to translate all international commitments ratified by the government at the provincial and district level through ESP that need to be aligned accordingly.

Session 2 focused on success stories and active citizen participation at the grass root level. PCE’s members highlighted their achievements in light of community mobilization and facilitating citizen-led initiatives. The session also included speeches from girl champions of education and youth representatives on the importance of girls’ education. The session was chaired by Hugh McLean of the Open Society Foundations who was joined by Ms. Tahira Ahmad, National Secretary of Pakistan Girl Guides Association (PGGA). Ms. Tahira went on to detail the various efforts made by PGGA to promote girls’ education and draw focus towards empowering girls’ at both national and international level.

The final session of the first day underscored the role elected representatives can play towards ensuring effective citizen involvement in education policymaking. This panel featured legislators from the Senate and Provincial Assembly including Mr. Taj Haider, Senator Pakistan Peoples’ Party Parliamentarian (PPP-P), Ms. Sehar Kamran Senator (PPP-P) and Ms. Rahila Khadam Hussain Member Provincial Assembly Pakistan Muslim League N (MPA, PML-N).

Representatives from mainstream political parties touched upon various education issues in their constituencies and elaborated upon the parts of their party manifestos that dealt with education.

The plenary discussion on day 2 focused on exploring emergent advocacy channels for civil society to synergize for the improvement of human rights in Pakistan. The session underlined the various spaces and opportunities present on the national and international level to work together towards attainment and implementation of human rights, especially the Right to Education (RTE). Ms. Natalia from OSF introduced the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and how it can be used as a platform for civic engagement. Ms. Saadia Hussain detailed the various UN advocacy mechanisms and how her organization SPARC has been making use of these mechanisms to effectively advocate for the rights of children. Mr. Rene Raya from ASPBAE underscored the importance of strategic partnerships at regional and global to amplify the effect of national undertakings of civil society organizations. Furthering the discussion, Honourable Justice Chohan highlighted the role of National Commission of Human Rights as an effective advocacy tool that can be used to draw attention to various human right issues in the country.
Picture Gallery

Day-2
The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) board meeting in Paris aimed at consolidating key reforms to further strengthen GPE and prepare partnership for future growth, delivery, and impact. Ms. Zehra Arshad, National Coordinator of PCE, attended the meeting and took active part in various board decisions. The key agenda for the board meeting is outlined as follow:

* Risk Reduction and Risk Finance for Education Approach
* Strategy and Impact Assessment
* Replenishment 2020
* Effective and Efficient Partnerships
* Domestic Resources and Monitoring of Commitments
* Advocacy and Social Accountability (ASA)
* Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)

The board discussed the milestones achieved for the year 2017 and proposed actions in response to the milestones missed. The platform was used to discuss the design features for GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) that is aimed at accelerating progress towards GPE 2020, and the long term realization of Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Read more on the KIX design and the board meeting agenda [here](#).

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**Harvesting Hope**

‘Harvesting Hope’ campaign is about raising awareness on the importance of girls’ education and generating public support for this cause. We believe that educating girls is the best investment we can make to alleviate poverty and create a safer world where they develop an identity of their own. We are looking for champions and portraits of courage, be it a child, a parent, a teacher, a citizen, government functionary, who has taken that plunge, that leap of faith and has made it possible for one girl child, one family or the entire neighborhood to receive good quality education regardless of all sorts of cultural, social, physical, financial barriers. For more visit our [Facebook](#) page.

“Sometimes I find old newspapers on the street. They appeal to me very much because they look like black and white paintings. The words are carved from thin black lines and sometimes, there are coloured pictures in them. I try to imagine what they say, what those lines mean and what story they tell. I can’t read but the newspapers that I find fascinate me. There is no school in my village, so I help my mother in cleaning the house. I am also learning how to cook so I can help my family when I get married. I really wish I could go to school. I want to write words which look like paintings and then once I learn that, I will teach my younger brothers as well.” - Zainab
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