

**Project Information**

- Country: Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- Project Name: Project for Upgrading Primary Girls Schools into Elementary Schools in Southern Rural Sindh (ODA Grant)
- Cooperation Period: 2014–2016
- Implementing Organization: School Education & Literacy Department, Government of Sindh

**1. Background and Project Summary**

While access to basic education is on the increase in Pakistan, its school enrollment rates in primary and lower secondary education are still lower than those of neighboring countries. In the target province of this project, Sindh, the situation was particularly serious in 2013; the school enrollment rate was 50% in primary education and 13% in lower secondary education, below the national averages, while the elementary school enrollment rate and junior high school enrollment rate among rural girls were even lower, at 36% and meager 7%, respectively.

Against such a background, JICA began to provide ODA grant aid in the southern rural part of Sindh in 2014. The goal was to give female students better access to basic education and narrow down the gender gap in educational opportunity by constructing additional classrooms and other facilities for female junior high school students (aged 10–12) on the premises of existing elementary schools (targeted at 5–9 year olds) and rebuilding elementary school classrooms that were dilapidated and becoming less safe.

**2. Basic Education in Pakistan from a Gender Perspective**

In many schools in Pakistan, male and female students learn separately in separate classrooms or school buildings from upper elementary grades or junior high school. Under such circumstances, it is not unusual for rural girls to have to give up going on to secondary school after completion of primary education because there are no junior high schools for girls within their commutable areas. In fact, data shows that a half-kilometer increase in the distance to school decreases female enrollment by 20% (World Development Report 2012). Besides the distance to school, lack of toilets and hand-wash stations for girls is another factor contributing to the low enrollment rate among female students.

Nevertheless, if girls can continue with their school studies, they are certain to become more confident in their own possibilities and increase their self-confidence, social skills, negotiation skills, future incomes and abilities to protect themselves from violence and poor health. This is the reason that it is an urgent task to resolve the gender gap in education.

**3. Initiatives from a Gender Perspective and Their Positive Impacts**

Here are the main positive impacts of this project:

**(1) Better access to education offered to many female junior high school students**

In southern Sindh, special classrooms for lower secondary education for girls were completed in 29 schools (in November 2016), which were put into use at the beginning of the following school semester in April 2017. As the result of this cooperation, the 29 schools now has new classrooms to accommodate a total of about 3,800 junior high school students (sixth, seventh and eighth graders).

Following this, it was decided in March 2016 that similar support would be provided to 25 schools in northern Sindh, and these new classrooms are scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2018 in all the 25 schools. Completion of all these classrooms is expected to give about 2,800 more students access to secondary education as junior high school students.

**(2) Provision of a safe and comfortable learning environment for female students**

In southern Sindh, existing 37 classrooms in 12 girls' elementary schools that had had safety problems were rebuilt to improve the learning environment for female students.

One major reason that female students quit elementary or junior high school is that many schools do not have separate toilets for boys and girls. This project has also set up girls' toilets, helping female students to go to school more comfortably.

Photo) Female elementary school students to learn in one of the completed classrooms

This project has improved the female school enrollment rate in rural areas, leading to narrowing down the gender gap. It has also expanded future career options and possibilities for girls and has contributed substantially to resolving the gender gap in education by constructing additional classrooms and school buildings for female junior high school students to allow female students who had no alternative but to give up moving on to secondary education in the past to continue with their school studies.

