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KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT POLICY

(2026-2030)



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KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

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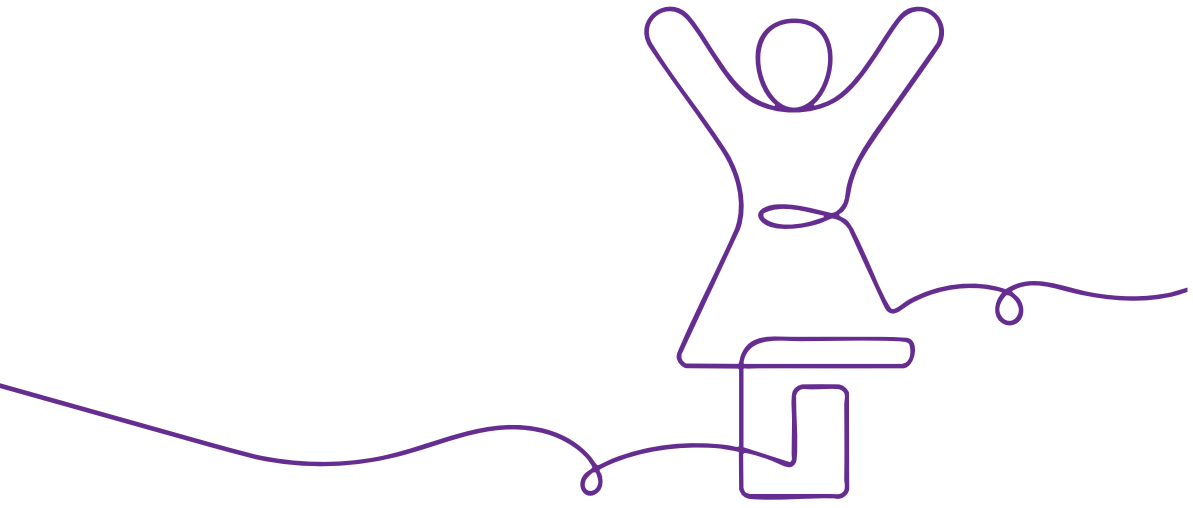


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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADP	Annual Development Plan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
GSP+	Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus
KPCSW	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
P&D	Planning and Development Department
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
WEP	Women Empowerment Policy

Message by

Mr. Sohail Khan Afridi



Chief Minister / Minister Incharge, Government of Khyber pakhtunkhwa
Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reaffirms its commitment to advancing women's rights as a fundamental requirement for inclusive growth, social justice, and sustainable development. Women's empowerment is not only a matter of equity and human rights, but a necessary condition for reducing poverty, strengthening social cohesion, and improving development outcomes across sectors.

Over the past years, the province has undergone significant administrative, demographic, and socio-economic changes, including the integration of the Merged Districts, rapid population growth, increased climate-related risks, and evolving governance and service delivery reforms. While progress has been made through legislative measures such as the Domestic Violence Act 2021 and the Women's Property Rights Act 2019, as well as sectoral initiatives across education, health, social protection, and employment, gaps persist in women's access to economic opportunities, quality education, essential services, asset ownership, and decision-making spaces. These disparities vary across districts and are more pronounced in rural and underserved areas. Women's labour force participation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains at approximately 14 percent, compared to the national average of 24 percent, limiting women's full participation in the province's social and economic development.

The Women Empowerment Policy (WEP) 2026-2030 has been formulated to respond to these realities in a structured and practical manner. The Policy moves beyond articulation of commitments and places emphasis on implementation, institutional accountability, and alignment with mainstream planning and budgeting systems. It provides a clear framework for coordinated action by provincial departments, district administrations, and relevant institutions, with the objective of translating policy intent into measurable improvements in women's lives. The Policy is closely linked with the KP Social Protection Policy, the KP Climate Change Policy 2022, and the provincial SDG Framework, particularly Goals 5 and 10, ensuring that gender equality is systematically integrated across governance, service delivery, and development planning.

This Policy reflects the Provincial Government's resolve to strengthen service delivery, expand women's economic participation, improve access to justice and protection, enhance political and civic participation, and address emerging challenges such as digital exclusion and climate vulnerability. It also seeks to ensure that gender priorities are systematically integrated into governance processes, rather than addressed through isolated or short-term interventions.

By mainstreaming gender equality across all sectors, the province aims to demonstrate tangible progress on women's rights while contributing to national and global development objectives.

The Government looks forward to the collective efforts of all stakeholders in implementing the WEP 2026-2030, so that women and girls across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are able to fully participate in, and benefit from, the province's development. I remain confident that sustained political commitment, institutional coordination, and consistent implementation will enable the province to achieve measurable progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment.

Message by

Mr. Shahab Ali Shah

Chief Secretary
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



The Constitution of Pakistan affirms the principle of gender equality and provides the State with the mandate to adopt measures that ensure equal opportunities for women and men. This constitutional responsibility requires sustained and practical actions, particularly in provinces such as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where social norms, geographic dispersion, and service delivery constraints continue to shape women's access to rights and opportunities.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has experienced significant transitions over the past decade. The integration of the Merged Districts, a rapidly growing and youthful population, increased urbanisation, and repeated exposure to climate-related shocks have placed new demands on provincial institutions. While women constitute nearly half of the province's population, available evidence indicates persistent gaps in key areas, including education completion, labour force participation, access to formal employment, asset ownership, and effective access to justice. These disparities are more pronounced in rural and underserved districts, where service outreach and institutional capacity remain uneven. Addressing these disparities requires not isolated interventions but a systematic, whole-of-government approach where every department recognizes its role in advancing women's rights.

Socio-cultural constraints, combined with structural barriers in health, education, mobility, and skills development, continue to limit women's full participation in economic and civic life. At the same time, recurrent floods, displacement, and economic volatility have disproportionately affected women and girls, increasing their vulnerability and reducing continuity in education, livelihoods, and essential services. These realities underscore the need for a coordinated and system-wide policy response rather than fragmented or project-based interventions. Women's empowerment is not a standalone concern of the Social Welfare Department; it must be mainstreamed across all government functions. The Education Department must ensure gender parity in enrollment and retention. The Health Department must provide accessible maternal and reproductive health services. The Finance Department must allocate resources through Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB). The Planning and Development Department (P&D) must integrate gender indicators in development projects. Each department has a constitutional obligation to uphold women's rights within its mandate.

The WEP 2026-2030 has been developed to address these challenges in a comprehensive and implementation-oriented manner. The Policy strengthens alignment between constitutional guarantees, provincial planning and budgeting processes, and departmental service delivery systems. It clarifies institutional roles, emphasizes inter-departmental coordination, and promotes the use of data and monitoring mechanisms to support informed decision-making and accountability. The Government extends full administrative support to the Social Welfare Department as the focal agency coordinating policy implementation. However, success depends on active ownership by all line departments, district administrations, and attached formations. Implementation will be supported through existing coordination mechanisms including the Chief Secretary's monthly review meetings, departmental performance monitoring systems, and the provincial P&D's oversight of development projects.

As the focal department, the Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department will coordinate implementation in collaboration with line departments and district administrations, while existing governance and oversight mechanisms will be utilised to track progress and address implementation gaps. The Policy builds on earlier efforts and lessons learned, with a clear focus on translating commitments into measurable outcomes for women and girls across all districts of the province.

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains committed to strengthening institutional capacity, improving service delivery, and ensuring that women are able to participate meaningfully in economic, social, and civic life. Effective implementation of this Policy will require sustained administrative leadership, coordinated action across departments, and continued engagement with all relevant stakeholders. I call upon all Secretaries, Additional Chief Secretaries, and administrative heads to demonstrate leadership in implementing the WEP within their respective domains. Gender equality is not an optional agenda; it is a constitutional mandate and an administrative responsibility. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is committed to ensuring that women and girls can participate fully in the province's development, and this commitment must be reflected in the actions of every government department and institution.

Message by

Syed Nazar Hussian Shah



Secretary to Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,
Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department

The revision and finalization of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa WEP (2026-2030) mark an important step in the Government's continued commitment to advancing gender equality, women's rights, and inclusive development in the province. This process was undertaken in recognition of evolving socio-economic realities, constitutional guarantees, national priorities, and Pakistan's national and international commitments related to women's empowerment and gender equity.

The Social Welfare Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, acknowledges with appreciation the sustained technical guidance and strategic support of UN Women, and the Embassy of Germany, whose engagement throughout the policy revision process significantly strengthened the analytical rigor, alignment with global best practices, and coherence with national and provincial gender frameworks. Their consistent support, particularly in evidence-based policy formulation, stakeholder consultations, contributed meaningfully to the quality and relevance of the revised policy.

We place on record our sincere appreciation for the leadership and commitment of the Chairperson, KPCSW, whose stewardship and institutional support ensured that women's voices, priorities, and rights remained central to the policy discourse. The Commission's critical inputs, advocacy, and coordination role were instrumental in grounding the policy in the lived realities of women across the province.

The constructive contributions of provincial line departments, attached formations, district administrations, and statutory bodies are also gratefully acknowledged. Their engagement during consultations and technical reviews helped ensure inter-sectoral coherence and practical implementation pathways. We also appreciate the valuable inputs provided by civil society organizations, academia, development partners, and subject-matter experts, whose insights enriched the policy with diverse perspectives and contextual relevance.

We extend our gratitude to the political leadership and senior management of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for their guidance and continued support, which provided the necessary institutional space to complete this process in a consultative and professional manner.

The Social Welfare Department looks forward to continued collaboration with all stakeholders during the implementation phase of the WEP, with the shared objective of creating an enabling environment where women and girls across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can fully realize their rights and potential.

Message by

Dr. Sumera Shams

Chairperson,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women



The WEP 2026-2030 reflects the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's continued commitment to strengthening the role of women in the social, economic, and public life of the province.

As a former Member of the Provincial Assembly and as Chairperson of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW), I consider this Policy to be closely aligned with the vision of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government, which emphasised justice, inclusion, and dignity for women as central to a fair and accountable society. Women's empowerment is not a peripheral issue, but as a core element of governance, social reform, and national progress. This Policy carries forward that vision in a structured and implementable manner.

The Policy has been shaped through careful review of past experience, wide engagement with government departments, and reflection on the realities faced by women across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in rural areas and the Merged Districts. It seeks to move beyond intent and provide a practical framework that connects laws, services, and public resources with measurable outcomes for women.

The WEP is designed to respond to these challenges by promoting an enabling environment in which women can exercise agency, benefit from public services on equal terms, and participate in economic and civic processes. The Policy emphasises equal access to education, skills development, justice, financial resources, and safe participation in public life, recognising that these elements are interlinked and essential for improving women's status and well-being.

The formulation of this Policy reflects a collective effort involving government departments, statutory bodies, civil society, and development partners. The KPCSW has provided effective oversight ensuring that the Policy remains grounded in evidence and aligned with constitutional guarantees and provincial realities.

I would like to acknowledge the sustained technical engagement and support of the UN Women and German Embassy provided during the policy development process, including their contributions and inputs, alongside the leadership of the Commission and the dedicated work of the Secretariat, have strengthened the quality and coherence of the Policy.

I also place on record my appreciation for the role of Social Welfare Department and team of the Commission for their rigorous review and commitment to ensuring that the Policy is firmly grounded in provincial governance systems.

It is my hope that the WEP 2026-2030 will serve as a practical guide for government action and a foundation for meaningful progress in advancing the rights, participation, and opportunities of women across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Policy Overview

The WEP 2026-2030 sets out the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's strategic direction for advancing gender equality and expanding opportunities for women and girls across the province. The Policy translates constitutional guarantees and Pakistan's international commitments into province-specific priorities, with particular attention to rural areas and the Merged Districts where disparities remain more pronounced.

Over recent years, the province has undertaken legislative and programmatic measures to improve the status of women. Despite this progress, many women and girls continue to face constraints in accessing education and skills, productive employment, financial services, asset ownership, justice and protection mechanisms, and participation in public decision-making. These constraints vary across districts and communities and are shaped by social norms, mobility limitations, service delivery gaps, and uneven access to information and digital connectivity. In certain areas, post-conflict conditions, geographic remoteness, and climate-related risks further limit opportunities. These realities underscore the need for clearer implementation arrangements, stronger inter-departmental coordination, and more effective alignment of public financing with gender priorities.

The Policy focuses on strengthening implementation and service delivery rather than legal recognition alone. It combines targeted measures for women and girls with systematic integration of gender considerations into provincial planning, budgeting, and sectoral programmes. The Policy remains aligned with the Constitution of Pakistan, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and complements relevant national and provincial policy frameworks.

The Policy is organised around six priority areas reflecting provincial needs: Economic Empowerment; Social Empowerment; Political Empowerment and Participation in Decision-Making; Legal Empowerment and Access to Justice; Digital Empowerment; and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Within each area, interventions are sequenced to strengthen access to services, improve participation in decision-making, and enhance women's ability to exercise their rights and opportunities over time.

Implementation shall be led by the Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in coordination with line departments and district administrations. Policy actions shall be integrated into sectoral plans, annual development and non-development budgets, and departmental performance frameworks. GRB, use of disaggregated data, and alignment with existing government monitoring systems shall guide implementation. The KPCSW shall provide independent oversight through review of progress and advisory reporting in accordance with its statutory mandate.

Through this Policy, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa affirms its commitment to improving institutional coordination and the effectiveness of public spending so that women and girls, including those facing geographic, social, or economic disadvantage, are able to access opportunities, exercise their rights, and contribute meaningfully to the province's development.

1. Introduction

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has an estimated population of approximately 40.9 million, with women and girls constituting nearly half of the provincial demographic profile. The province comprises a mix of major urban centres, extensive rural districts, and the Merged Districts, which continue to undergo administrative consolidation and service system expansion following their integration. These geographic and institutional variations directly influence how public services are accessed, how policies are implemented at field level, and how outcomes differ across districts.

Over the past decade, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has enacted multiple laws and introduced institutional measures aimed at strengthening the legal protection and social position of women. These initiatives have established an important statutory and policy foundation. However, service delivery outcomes remain uneven across districts. Gaps persist in access to education and skills development, formal employment and livelihoods, financial services, justice mechanisms, and participation in public decision-making. The scale and nature of these gaps vary by location, administrative reach, mobility constraints, and availability of frontline services, indicating the need for stronger operational coordination and more consistent implementation discipline.

Women's participation in economic and public life continues to be influenced more by administrative, service delivery, and structural constraints than by absence of legal entitlements. Limited access to productive assets, skills opportunities, transport, financial systems, and market linkages restrict economic participation. At the institutional level, fragmented implementation arrangements and limited integration of gender considerations into routine planning and budgeting processes reduce the effectiveness and sustainability of existing interventions.

The provincial operating environment is further shaped by recurrent natural disasters, population movements, and fiscal pressures on public services. Experience from recent emergencies demonstrates that women and girls often face greater difficulty in accessing relief, health services, documentation support, and livelihood restoration, particularly in districts with weaker institutional coverage. These realities require that gender considerations are embedded within routine service delivery, preparedness planning, and recovery arrangements rather than addressed through ad-hoc measures.

In this context, the WEP 2026-2030 provides a consolidated provincial framework to guide government action. The Policy seeks to strengthen alignment between laws, sector strategies, budget processes, and implementation systems, and to translate constitutional guarantees and national commitments into practical administrative action at provincial and district levels.

The Policy positions women's empowerment as a cross-cutting governance priority linked to service delivery performance, fiscal alignment, institutional accountability, and equitable access to public systems. It provides a structured basis for departments and district administrations to integrate gender considerations into routine planning, budgeting, and monitoring, with the objective of reducing persistent disparities and improving access to opportunities for women across all districts of the province.

1.1 Conceptual Foundations

The WEP 2026-2030 is grounded in the understanding that women's empowerment is a progressive process through which women gain greater ability to make meaningful choices and influence decisions affecting their lives, particularly in contexts where such choices have historically been constrained. This understanding reflects widely recognised development thinking that empowerment is shaped not by legal recognition alone, but by access to resources, decision-making power, and the ability to translate both into improved outcomes.[1]

In practical terms, women's empowerment involves three interlinked elements. First, women must have access to essential resources, including education, health services, skills, information, and productive assets. Second, women must be able to exercise agency, meaning the practical capacity to make decisions and act upon them within households, markets, communities, and public institutions. Third, empowerment must lead to tangible improvements in women's well-being and status, reflected in livelihoods, security, and participation in social and economic life. Progress in any one element, in isolation, is insufficient to produce sustainable change.

The Policy further recognises that empowerment is not limited to improving living conditions, but is fundamentally about expanding women's real and substantive opportunities. This perspective aligns with the capabilities approach, which emphasises enabling individuals to live lives they value, with dignity, autonomy, and freedom of choice.[2] For the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this implies strengthening enabling conditions across economic, social, and institutional systems rather than relying solely on short-term or project-based interventions.

To operationalise this understanding, the Policy adopts a structured empowerment pathway that reflects the stages through which lasting change occurs. These stages range from addressing basic welfare needs, to improving access to services and resources, strengthening awareness and confidence, enabling participation in decision-making processes, and ultimately ensuring influence and control over resources and outcomes.[3] This sequencing allows the Policy to balance immediate service delivery priorities with longer-term institutional and social transformation.

By adopting this conceptual foundation, the WEP 2026-2030 establishes a coherent basis for designing, sequencing, and assessing interventions across sectors. It supports a shift from fragmented initiatives towards integrated actions that strengthen women's role as economic actors, contributors to public life, and rights-holders, while remaining anchored in the social and institutional realities of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

1.2 Analytical and Methodological Approach

Gender mainstreaming shall constitute the central strategic approach of the WEP 2026-2030. For the purpose of this Policy, gender mainstreaming means the systematic incorporation of gender considerations in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, laws, programmes, and public expenditure across all departments and attached entities of the Government.[4] The intent is to ensure that gender considerations form part of routine planning, budgeting, and service delivery processes, and are not treated as a separate or stand-alone sectoral activity.

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[1] Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. Development and Change.

[2] Nussbaum, M. (2000). Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach. Cambridge University Press.

[3] Longwe, S. (1997). The Women's Empowerment Framework.

[4] European Institute for Gender Equality (2025). Gender Mainstreaming: Concepts and Definitions. Association for Women's Rights in Development (2004). Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Social Justice Analysis.

All departments shall be required to examine the gender implications of their policies, schemes, development proposals, and budget submissions, and to incorporate appropriate measures where disparities are identified. Departments shall progressively strengthen the use of gender-responsive planning and budgeting tools, improve availability of sex-disaggregated data, and integrate gender indicators within their monitoring and performance frameworks, in accordance with applicable rules and guidelines.

The Policy recognises that gender-related constraints are not uniform across the population and may vary by location, income level, disability, displacement status, and social background. In the context of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, women in the Merged Districts and remote rural areas often face comparatively limited access to public services, livelihood opportunities, infrastructure, and institutional outreach. Policy interventions therefore require differentiation based on local conditions and administrative capacity rather than uniform application.

Accordingly, focused attention shall be given to population groups facing higher vulnerability, including rural women, women with disabilities, women-headed households, widows, minority communities, and home-based workers, while maintaining universal service coverage and legal protections for all women and girls.

The Policy shall be implemented through a twin-track approach. Targeted measures shall address specific barriers faced by women in priority areas, while gender considerations shall be systematically integrated within sector policies, institutional procedures, and budgetary processes. This approach is intended to deliver measurable improvements in service access and outcomes, while progressively addressing structural and institutional gaps.

The revision of the Policy has been informed through consultations with relevant government departments, district administrations, and stakeholders. This process has supported alignment with existing laws, administrative arrangements, and implementation capacities.

1.3 Policy Alignment and Legal Framework

The WEP 2026-2030 is anchored in the constitutional framework of Pakistan. The Constitution guarantees equality before law and permits the State to adopt special measures for ensuring substantive equality between women and men. These provisions provide the legal authority for proactive and targeted policy interventions aimed at removing structural barriers and expanding equal opportunities.

Key constitutional provisions relevant to this Policy include:

- **Article 3:** Obligates the State to eliminate all forms of exploitation.
- **Article 4:** Ensures the right of individuals to be treated in accordance with law and to enjoy the protection of law.
- **Article 25:** Guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Article 25(3) expressly authorises the State to make special provisions for women.
- **Articles 26 and 27:** Provide for equality of access to public places and equality of employment in public service.
- **Article 32:** Requires special representation of women in local government institutions.
- **Article 34:** Directs the State to enable women to participate fully in all spheres of national life.

- **Article 35:** Mandates protection of the family, the mother, and the child.
- **Article 37(e):** Requires provision of just and humane conditions of work and maternity benefits for women in employment.
- **Articles 51 and 106:** Provide for reserved representation of women in the national and provincial legislatures.

Collectively, these constitutional provisions establish the mandate for affirmative action, institutional measures, and policy interventions to promote gender equality and women's participation in public, economic, and social life.

At the international level, the Policy operationalises Pakistan's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified in 1996.[5] Under CEDAW, Pakistan is required to eliminate discrimination against women through legislative, administrative, and institutional measures, including review of discriminatory laws, establishment of protection mechanisms, and enforcement of equality principles across public and private domains.

The Policy is also aligned with the SDGs, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), which calls for elimination of discrimination, increased participation of women in leadership and decision-making, and strengthened access to economic and social rights.[6] Relevant SDG targets are reflected in the Policy's sectoral priorities and implementation framework.

In addition, the Policy is consistent with internationally recognised frameworks to which Pakistan is a party, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, relevant ILO conventions, and United Nations Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.[7] These commitments are particularly relevant for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the context of post-conflict recovery, disaster response, and community stabilisation in the Merged Districts.

At the national level, the Policy is guided by the National Gender Policy Framework 2022, which provides strategic direction for advancing women's rights and participation across development sectors.[8] Alignment with the national framework ensures coherence between federal and provincial policy objectives and implementation arrangements.

The Policy also contributes to Pakistan's compliance obligations under the European Union Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), which requires effective implementation of international conventions relating to human rights, labour standards, and gender equality. Strengthening institutional mechanisms for women's rights supports continued compliance with these commitments.[9]

[5] Government of Pakistan. CEDAW, Ratified 1996.

[6] United Nations (2015). Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

[7] United Nations instruments and ILO Conventions ratified by Pakistan.

[8] Planning Commission of Pakistan (2022). National Gender Policy Framework.

[9] European Union. GSP+ Framework.

1.4 Integration with Provincial Sectoral Policies / Plans

The WEP 2026-2030 is designed to ensure coherence with key provincial strategies and sector frameworks so that gender equality is embedded as a cross-cutting priority within planning, budgeting, service delivery, and performance monitoring systems of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Alignment with major provincial policies and strategies is outlined below:

- **Provincial Sustainable Development Framework (2025-2030)**
  The Policy aligns with the Provincial Sustainable Development Framework, which recognises gender equality as a cross-cutting development priority. Indicators and targets under the WEP shall inform provincial performance reviews, annual development planning processes, and sector monitoring frameworks to ensure that progress on women's empowerment is reflected within provincial accountability mechanisms.[10]

- **KP Digital Transformation Strategy 2030**
  The Policy supports the objectives of the Digital Transformation Strategy by promoting women's access to digital services, digital literacy, and gender-responsive e-governance platforms. Integration with provincial digital systems, including citizen facilitation and grievance redress mechanisms, aims to reduce access barriers and improve women's interaction with public services.[11]

- **KP Social Protection Policy 2022 and Social Protection Strategy (2025-2030)**
  The Policy complements the provincial social protection framework by strengthening linkages between social assistance, livelihood support, and women's economic participation. Alignment supports improved targeting, social registry utilisation, and shock-responsive mechanisms, with specific consideration for women-headed households and vulnerable population groups.[12]

- **KP Climate Change Policy 2022**
  The Policy integrates gender considerations within climate resilience and disaster risk management initiatives by supporting women's participation in local preparedness structures and facilitating access to adaptation and recovery programmes. This alignment is particularly relevant for disaster-prone districts and the Merged Districts.[13]

- **KP Education Sector Plan (2020-2025)**
  The Policy reinforces sector objectives relating to girls' enrolment, retention, availability of female teachers, and safe learning environments. It also supports transition pathways from secondary education to skills development and employability programmes.[14]

- **KP Human Rights Policy (2018)**
  Alignment with the Human Rights Policy strengthens institutional coordination on protection of women's rights, prevention of discrimination, and access to justice mechanisms.[15]

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[10] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, P&D (2025). Provincial Sustainable Development Framework 2025–2030.

[11] Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (2020). KP Digital Transformation Strategy 2030.

[12] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2022). KP Social Protection Policy; Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2025). KP Social Protection Strategy 2025–2030.

[13] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Environment Protection Department (2022). KP Climate Change Policy.

[14] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Elementary and Secondary Education Department (2020). KP Education Sector Plan 2020–2025.

[15] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights Department (2018). KP Human Rights Policy.

- **KP Gender Strategy and Gender-Responsive Policing Policy (2024)**
  The Policy complements ongoing reforms in policing and rule of law aimed at improving women's access to police services, strengthening response mechanisms for Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and institutionalising gender-sensitive service delivery.[16]

- **KP Rule of Law Roadmap (2023-2028)**
  The Policy aligns with justice sector reform priorities relating to access to justice, accountability, and service delivery improvements, ensuring consistency between gender policy objectives and rule of law reforms.[17]

This alignment ensures that the WEP functions as an enabling and coordinating framework rather than a parallel policy instrument, strengthening coherence across sector investments, institutional reforms, and monitoring systems of the provincial government.

Available national and provincial indicators reflect persistent gender disparities in social, economic, and political outcomes. Pakistan ranked 148th out of 148 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, with an overall gender parity score of approximately 56.7 percent.[18] Within the national context, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa records comparatively weaker performance on women's economic participation and access indicators. The Women's Economic Empowerment Index for the province stands at approximately 0.35, compared to a national average of 0.39 and Punjab's score of 0.52.[19] These indicators highlight structural gaps in access to education, labour markets, assets, public services, and decision-making platforms, requiring targeted and coordinated policy response at the provincial level.

Gender disparities within the province are not uniform and vary significantly by geography, income levels, service coverage, and institutional reach. The Merged Districts and remote rural areas continue to exhibit comparatively weaker service delivery outcomes and limited institutional capacity, while urban areas present distinct challenges related to labour market participation, political engagement, and access to formal systems. These variations necessitate differentiated policy approaches rather than uniform interventions.

[16] Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police Department (2024). Gender Strategy and Gender-Responsive Policing Policy.

[17] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Home and Tribal Affairs Department (2023). Rule of Law Roadmap 2023–2028.

[18] World Economic Forum (2025). Global Gender Gap Report 2025.

[19] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa / UNDP. Women's Economic Empowerment Index estimates.

2. Provincial Context and Problem Statement

2.1 The Merged Districts

The integration of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018 created opportunities for extension of constitutional rights, service delivery systems, and local governance structures. However, multidimensional poverty remains highly concentrated across the seven Merged Districts, with significant gaps in education, infrastructure, connectivity, and institutional outreach.[20]

Female literacy in the Merged Districts remains substantially lower than both the Provincial average and male literacy rates, estimated at approximately 17 percent for women compared to over 75 percent for males. Internet access among women is limited to approximately 11 percent, while average daily electricity availability remains constrained in many areas.[21] In selected districts, education system capacity remains limited, with high student-to-female-teacher ratios at primary level and low post-primary retention of girls. In Bajaur, only a small proportion of women aged 25 years and above have completed formal education.[22]

Social and customary dispute resolution mechanisms continue to dominate local decision-making processes in many areas, with limited participation of women despite constitutional guarantees. These conditions restrict women's access to services, mobility, documentation, and formal grievance redress mechanisms, reinforcing structural exclusion.

2.2 Rural-Urban Divide

The rural-urban divide significantly shapes access to services, livelihoods, and public participation. Multidimensional poverty and service delivery gaps remain higher in rural districts. Mobility constraints, transport costs, and availability of female service providers affect timely access to health and education services. Agricultural and livestock activities remain heavily reliant on women's labour, yet participation is largely informal and poorly connected to markets and extension services.

Urban areas present different constraints. Female labour force participation in urban KP remains low at approximately 9-10 percent, among the lowest rates nationally.[23] Political participation indicators also show persistent gaps, with higher gender differences in voter turnout in metropolitan constituencies compared to several rural districts.

Provincial literacy data reflects a persistent gender gap. Female literacy in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands at approximately 37.15 percent compared to over 64.57 percent for males, reflecting a gender gap of over 27 %with more than half of the female population remaining

[20] Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey / Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Multidimensional poverty data for Merged Districts.

[21] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa / Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Female literacy (~17%) and internet access (~11%) estimates for Merged Districts.

[22] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa / Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Bajaur district education data — women aged 25+ with formal education.

[23] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023). Labour Force Survey.

illiterate in the majority of districts.[24] Access to healthcare in rural areas remains constrained by travel distance, transport affordability, and reliance on male accompaniment, resulting in delayed care-seeking behaviour.

2.3 Situation Analysis by Empowerment Domain

Social Outcomes

The social outcomes for women in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa indicate persistent service delivery gaps across maternal health, protection systems, and labour participation, with significant variation across geography and income groups. These gaps reflect both access constraints and limitations in system capacity, coordination, and outreach.

Maternal health indicators remain below desired thresholds. The maternal mortality ratio is estimated at 165 per 100,000 live births.[25] Only 24 percent of pregnant women receive the recommended minimum of four antenatal care visits, while skilled birth attendance is recorded at 48.3 percent, with lower coverage in rural districts and the Merged Districts.[26] The contraceptive prevalence rate stands at 28.1 percent, declining further to 21.8 percent in the Merged Districts.[27] Together, these indicators point to weaknesses in preventive outreach, referral continuity, and availability of accessible reproductive health services, resulting in avoidable health risks for women.

Protection outcomes also remain weak. Provincial records show 3,397 reported cases of GBV in 2024, while available evidence indicates conviction rates of below one percent.[28] This gap between reporting and adjudication highlights operational constraints within investigation, prosecution, survivor support, and case management systems. Persistent underreporting suggests that recorded figures do not fully capture the scale of incidents, particularly in areas with limited access to police and protection services.

Women's participation in the workforce remains concentrated in low-productivity and informal activities. Approximately 68 percent of employed women work in agriculture, largely as unpaid family workers, and around half receive no direct wages.[29] Time-use data further shows that women spend an average of 5.3 hours per day on unpaid care and domestic work, while male contribution remains minimal.[30] The combined effect of unpaid labour burden and informal employment constrains women's ability to engage in education, skills development, paid work, and public participation.

Overall, social indicators demonstrate that improvements in legal protections have not been matched by commensurate gains in service delivery coverage, system responsiveness, and economic participation. These gaps require coordinated interventions across health, protection, labour, and social services rather than isolated programme responses.

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[24] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2021/2023). Provincial literacy data.

[25] Government of Pakistan (2020). Maternal Mortality Estimates. [MMR: 165 per 100,000 live births]

[26] Government of Pakistan (2019). Demographic and Health Survey. [Antenatal care: 24%; Skilled birth attendance: 48.3%]

[27] Government of Pakistan (2019). Demographic and Health Survey. [Contraceptive prevalence: 28.1%; Merged Districts: 21.8%]

[28] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Home Department (2024); Sustainable Social Development Organization (2025). [3,397 GBV cases in 2024; conviction rate below 1%]

[29] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2021). Labour Force Survey. [68% women in agriculture; ~half receive no wages]

[30] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2019). Time Use Survey. [Women: 5.3 hrs/day unpaid care work]

Political Participation and Representation

Women's participation in electoral politics and executive decision-making in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains limited, with representation largely confined to reserved seats and minimal presence in competitive political and executive roles.

In the 2024 Provincial Assembly elections, only one woman was elected on a general seat, while all 26 women members entered the Assembly through reserved seats.[31] At the executive level, the 2025 provincial cabinet does not include any women members, reflecting limited representation in decision-making and policy leadership positions.[32] This pattern indicates continued reliance on constitutional reservations rather than competitive inclusion in mainstream political processes.

Electoral participation indicators also reflect persistent gender gaps. The province records a gender gap in voter turnout of approximately 15.7 percent, the highest among provinces.[33] Women also constitute a disproportionate share of individuals without national identity documentation, with approximately 84 percent of persons without Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) being women, constraining access to voter registration and public services.[34]

In selected districts, informal local arrangements have restricted women's participation in voting. In Shangla district, over 59,000 women were unable to cast votes in the 2024 elections due to such arrangements, indicating gaps in enforcement of electoral laws and administrative oversight.[35] These trends highlight the need for strengthened voter registration outreach, enforcement of electoral safeguards, and improved coordination between election management bodies, district administration, and law enforcement agencies.

Economic Participation and Asset Ownership

Women's participation in the labour market and access to productive assets in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remain significantly below provincial and national benchmarks, indicating structural constraints in employment access, skills development, mobility, and asset accumulation.

Female labour force participation in the province stands at approximately 16 percent, compared to 63 percent for men, with only 2.5 percent of women engaged in formal employment. Female unemployment is estimated at 16 percent, the highest among provinces.[36] These indicators reflect limited absorption of women into formal labour markets, weak alignment between skills development programmes and labour demand, and access constraints related to transport, workplace availability, and safety.

Ownership of productive assets remains highly unequal. Only 3 percent of women report ownership of housing assets, compared to 72 percent of men, while land ownership stands at approximately 2 percent for women versus 27 percent for men.[37] Limited asset ownership restricts access to collateral, credit, and long-term economic security. Despite the enactment

[31] Election Commission of Pakistan (2024). General Elections Data and District Reports. [1 woman elected on general seat; 26 on reserved seats]

[32] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2025). Provincial Cabinet Notifications. [No women members in 2025 cabinet]

[33] Election Commission of Pakistan (2023). Voter Turnout Analysis. [Gender gap: 15.7%, highest among provinces]

[34] NADRA (2022). CNIC Registration Statistics. [84% of persons without CNICs are women]

[35] Election Commission of Pakistan (2024). Shangla district data. [59,000+ women unable to vote in 2024 elections]

[36] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2023). Labour Force Survey. [Female LFPR: 16%; Formal employment: 2.5%; Unemployment: 16%]

[37] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2021). Household and Asset Ownership Statistics. [Housing: 3% women vs 72% men; Land: 2% vs 27%]

of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2019, administrative records indicate that 699 women have been formally registered as denied inheritance since 2023, pointing to enforcement gaps, procedural delays, and limited access to legal remedies.[38]

Financial inclusion among women remains limited at approximately 13 percent. In addition, available banking and microfinance assessments indicate that between 50 and 70 percent of microloans issued in women's names are operated or controlled by male household members, constraining effective control over income and financial decision-making.[39] These patterns reduce the intended impact of financial inclusion initiatives and highlight the need for stronger safeguards, monitoring, and complementary support measures.

Overall, economic indicators demonstrate that legislative measures alone have not translated into proportional gains in labour participation, asset ownership, or financial autonomy. Addressing these gaps requires coordinated interventions across skills development, labour market access, property rights enforcement, financial sector regulation, and transport and safety infrastructure.

Digital Access and Connectivity

Gender gaps in digital access and connectivity remain significant and are increasingly influencing access to public services, information, financial platforms, and economic participation.

At the national level, Pakistan records a mobile phone gender gap of 38 percent and a smartphone gender gap of 49 percent, the highest in Asia.[40] Within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, approximately 53 percent of women own mobile phones compared to 86 percent of men, while smartphone ownership among women stands at 26 percent compared to 52 percent among men.[41] These gaps limit women's ability to access e-government services, digital financial platforms, education resources, and market information.

Digital exclusion is more pronounced in the Merged Districts. Available provincial assessments indicate that approximately 89 percent of women in the Merged Districts report no access to the internet, reflecting combined constraints related to network coverage, affordability, digital literacy, device availability, and local norms.[42] These conditions restrict uptake of digital public services and weaken the effectiveness of province-wide digital transformation initiatives in underserved areas.

Overall, digital access disparities create secondary barriers across service delivery, financial inclusion, education, and grievance redress mechanisms. Addressing these gaps requires coordinated action across connectivity infrastructure, device access, digital skills development, and design of inclusive digital service platforms.

Legal Empowerment and Access to Justice

Institutional capacity and service coverage within the justice and law enforcement systems continue to influence women's access to effective legal protection and remedies.

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[38] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Revenue Department (2024). Inheritance Case Records. [699 women registered as denied inheritance since 2023]

[39] State Bank of Pakistan (2022). Financial Inclusion and Microfinance Data. [Women's financial inclusion: 13%; 50-70% of women's microloans controlled by male household members]

[40] GSMA (2024). Mobile Gender Gap Report. [Pakistan mobile gender gap: 38%; smartphone gap: 49%, highest in Asia]

[41] GSMA (2024). Mobile Gender Gap Report - KP data. [Women mobile ownership: 53% vs men 86%; Smartphone: 26% vs 52%]

[42] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, P&D (2023). Digital Access Assessment for Merged Districts. [89% of women report no internet access]

At the higher judiciary level, there is one woman judge currently serving in the Peshawar High Court, while women constitute approximately 28 percent of the district judiciary.[43] Despite increased representation at lower tiers, operational constraints persist across reporting, investigation, prosecution, and adjudication processes, affecting consistency and timeliness of case resolution.

Implementation under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2021 is progressing in a phased manner. Administrative records indicate that District Protection Committees are yet to be fully operationalised in a number of districts, reflecting the need for further institutional strengthening, coordination, and resource alignment.[44] Enhanced operationalisation of these committees will support improved inter-agency coordination, survivor referral pathways, and structured case management at the district level.

Judicial outcomes further indicate enforcement challenges. A significant proportion of harassment-related convictions are overturned or pardoned at appellate stages, affecting predictability and deterrence.[45]

Service availability at the policing level remains limited. The province currently operates only two women-friendly police stations, which constrains geographic coverage and access to specialised reporting and protection services.[46]

Overall, these indicators highlight the importance of continued institutional strengthening, procedural standardisation, and service expansion across policing, prosecution, judicial administration, and statutory protection mechanisms.

Climate Change and DRR

Climate-related shocks and disasters continue to affect population groups unevenly, with women and children facing comparatively higher exposure and vulnerability due to mobility constraints, caregiving responsibilities, and differential access to resources and services.

Available evidence indicates that women and children are up to 14 times more likely to experience mortality during disaster events compared to men.[47] The 2022 floods affected approximately 5.71 million women and girls, increasing exposure to protection risks, while an estimated 650,000 pregnant women required maternal health services during the emergency period, placing additional pressure on health and social service systems.[48] These figures demonstrate the scale of demand placed on emergency response mechanisms and the need for stronger preparedness and surge capacity.

Service conditions at relief and displacement sites further highlighted operational gaps. In certain locations, approximately 3,000 women were required to share fewer than 12 sanitation facilities, and nearly eight million women and girls lacked access to menstrual hygiene supplies, affecting health, dignity, and protection outcomes during response and early recovery phases.[49]

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[43] Peshawar High Court / Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan. Judicial representation data. [1 woman judge in PHC; 28% of district judiciary]

[44] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Administrative records of District Protection Committees under DV Act 2021.

[45] Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (2024). Harassment conviction/appellate review data. [Significant proportion overturned/pardoned at appellate stages]

[46] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Police Department. Women-friendly police station records. [Only 2 stations province-wide]

[47] UNICEF (2022). Gender and Disaster Vulnerability Briefs. [Women/children up to 14 times more likely to die in disasters]

[48] Government of Pakistan (2022). Flood Impact and Needs Assessments. [5.71 million women/girls affected; 650,000 pregnant women needed services]

[49] Government of Pakistan (2022) / UNICEF (2022). Relief site conditions. [~3,000 women sharing <12 sanitation facilities; ~8 million lacking hygiene supplies]

Overall, climate-related emergencies expose capacity limitations in shelter management, health service continuity, water and sanitation provision, and protection coordination. These gaps reinforce the need for systematic integration of gender considerations within disaster preparedness planning, early warning systems, relief logistics, and recovery programming at provincial and district levels.

2.4 Underlying Structural Factors

The patterns identified in Section 2.3 reflect structural and systemic constraints within governance arrangements, institutional coordination mechanisms, and public financing frameworks. These factors influence the consistency, scale, and effectiveness of policy implementation and affect the capacity of public systems to translate policy commitments into measurable outcomes.

Institutional arrangements and coordination

The current institutional architecture integrates women's empowerment functions within the Social Welfare Department, with responsibilities distributed across multiple line departments. Compared with provinces that operate dedicated women development departments, this arrangement places greater emphasis on inter-departmental coordination and internal capacity strengthening to ensure consistent mainstreaming of gender considerations across sector policies, planning processes, and budget submissions. Continued strengthening of strategic leadership, technical capacity, and coordination mechanisms remains important for effective system-wide integration.[50]

Oversight and accountability mechanisms

Independent oversight structures play a critical role in monitoring implementation, addressing grievances, and supporting compliance with statutory obligations. Administrative records indicate that leadership positions within the KPCSW have experienced extended vacancies in recent years, and notification of District Women Committees has progressed at a gradual pace. These factors underscore the need to further strengthen institutional continuity, administrative processes, and district-level oversight arrangements to enhance monitoring coverage and responsiveness.[51]

Public financing and budget alignment

Analysis of the provincial budget indicates that allocations directly classified as high gender relevance remain limited. For FY 2025-26, approximately PKR 16,108 million, representing 0.82 percent of the total provincial budget of PKR 1,957,722 million, falls under high gender relevance classifications. Institutions with primary mandates related to women's empowerment collectively receive approximately PKR 280 million. In addition, climate-related interventions are not currently reflected under high gender relevance classifications. These patterns highlight the need for continued refinement of GRB tools, expenditure tagging, and integration of gender considerations within sector investment frameworks.[52]

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[50] Comparative provincial administrative arrangements and departmental mandates. [Institutional architecture analysis]

[51] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Administrative records of KPCSW and district notifications. [Leadership vacancies; District Women Committees notification pace]

[52] Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2025). Gender Analysis of KP Budget FY 2025–26. [PKR 16,108 million = 0.82% of total budget under high gender relevance]

Social norms and enforcement environment

While statutory frameworks provide formal protection of women's rights, implementation outcomes are influenced by local practices, community norms, and administrative reach. In certain areas, customary practices continue to shape mobility, access to resources, political participation, and inheritance. Strengthening enforcement capacity, administrative outreach, and community-level engagement remains essential for ensuring that legal protections translate into consistent outcomes.

Taken together, these structural factors indicate the importance of sustained institutional strengthening, improved coordination mechanisms, enhanced budget alignment, and strengthened implementation systems to support effective delivery of gender equality objectives across the province.

2.5 Core Problem Statement

In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the existence of legal protections and policy commitments has not yet translated into consistent improvements in women's access to services, economic participation, public decision-making, and legal protection. Progress remains uneven across districts due to limitations in institutional capacity, fragmented coordination across sectors, constrained fiscal prioritisation for gender outcomes, and variable enforcement of statutory provisions at the field level. Social practices in certain areas further influence service uptake and participation. These combined factors continue to limit the effectiveness of existing frameworks and create a gap between policy intent and operational results, underscoring the need for stronger system integration, implementation discipline, and accountability mechanisms.

3. Review of the Women Empowerment Policy 2017

The WEP 2017 represented the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's first consolidated attempt to organise gender-related objectives within a single provincial policy framework. Building on the earlier policy framework issued in 2014, the Policy provided a common reference point for departments, legislators, and oversight bodies to align actions relating to women's rights, service access, economic participation, and legal protection. It structured provincial priorities around four thematic areas: social empowerment, economic empowerment, legal empowerment and access to justice, and political empowerment.

From an institutional standpoint, the principal contribution of WEP 2017 was the formalisation of gender as a recognised policy domain within provincial governance. Gender considerations became more visible in legislative initiatives, departmental proposals, and policy discourse, and the Policy supported the enactment of several important provincial laws relating to protection, property rights, workplace safety, legal aid, reproductive health, home-based workers, and institutional oversight. These measures strengthened the statutory framework governing women's rights in the province.

However, implementation experience over the policy period demonstrates that legislative consolidation alone was not sufficient to generate proportional improvements in service delivery and participation outcomes. The Policy functioned primarily as a guiding instrument rather than an operational mechanism capable of reshaping administrative behaviour, budget prioritisation, and performance incentives across departments and districts.

A central design limitation was the implicit assumption that women's exclusion could be addressed mainly through improved access to existing systems. In practice, many of those systems were not configured to accommodate women's mobility constraints, safety considerations, documentation gaps, time burdens, and asset ownership realities. Persistently weak indicators in female literacy (approximately 37.15 percent compared to 64.57 percent for males), labour force participation (below 10 percent), and formal employment (2.5 percent) indicate that incremental integration did not materially alter structural patterns of exclusion.[53]

Institutionally, coordination and accountability mechanisms envisaged under the Policy did not mature into functioning governance platforms capable of driving inter-departmental alignment and implementation discipline. Monitoring arrangements relied largely on voluntary departmental engagement, limiting collective ownership and reducing the ability to resolve operational bottlenecks or enforce corrective action.[54]

Fiscal alignment also remained limited. Gender priorities articulated in policy were not consistently embedded within development planning cycles, budget ceilings, or expenditure tracking systems. Gender tools were introduced without corresponding fiscal authority or enforceable budget linkages, constraining scale and sustainability of interventions. Available evidence indicates that only a marginal share of development expenditure during the policy period was directly linked to gender outcomes.[55]

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[53] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2021; 2023). Labour Force Survey; Literacy Statistics. [Female literacy: 37.15%; LFPR: below 10%; formal employment: 2.5%]

[54] Ullah et al. (2022). Review of Gender Mainstreaming Mechanisms in KP. [Monitoring relied on voluntary departmental engagement]

[55] Khan & Hussain (2022). Public Sector Development Programme Gender Allocation Review. [Marginal share of development expenditure linked to gender outcomes]

Operationally, the Policy also produced fragmented role expectations for women within public systems. Women were addressed through protection mechanisms, selected livelihood initiatives, and quota-based political participation, without parallel pathways for leadership development, asset accumulation, and decision-making authority. Representation within executive governance and parts of the justice sector remained limited, affecting institutional responsiveness and policy influence.[56]

In addition, the interaction between statutory reform and local governance realities received limited operational attention. While legal protections expanded, enforcement capacity, administrative outreach, and community-level uptake varied across districts. In many contexts, informal practices continued to influence access to services, mobility, inheritance, and participation, moderating the practical impact of legal reforms.

Overall, the experience of WEP 2017 demonstrates that sustainable gender outcomes depend not only on policy articulation and legislative reform, but on the strength of institutional architecture, fiscal integration, coordination mechanisms, and enforcement capacity. These lessons underscore the need for the next policy cycle to move beyond policy consolidation toward stronger governance design, budget anchoring, implementation discipline, and measurable delivery accountability.

3.1 Rationale for Revision of the Women Empowerment Policy

The revision of the WEP is necessitated by a combination of policy-cycle completion, structural governance lessons emerging from the 2017 policy experience, and material changes in the province's administrative, demographic, fiscal, and risk environment. The earlier policy period formally concluded in 2023, and the intervening years have demonstrated that while legislative progress has been achieved, institutional systems, financing structures, and delivery mechanisms require recalibration to translate commitments into consistent outcomes.

Implementation experience under the previous policy cycle indicates that gender objectives were not sufficiently embedded within mainstream planning, budgeting, and performance management systems. Gender priorities remained largely programme-driven and dependent on departmental discretion, with limited fiscal anchoring, weak monitoring architecture, and uneven district-level execution. This created a gap between policy intent and operational delivery, particularly in sectors requiring coordinated multi-departmental action such as education retention, labour market access, justice delivery, social protection, and disaster response. A revised policy is therefore required to strengthen governance design, clarify institutional accountability, and integrate gender objectives more firmly into core administrative systems.

The administrative integration of the former FATA into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has fundamentally altered the province's service delivery footprint, governance complexity, and resource demands. The Merged Districts present distinct post-conflict recovery requirements, infrastructure deficits, institutional capacity gaps, and social dynamics that were not adequately reflected in the 2017 framework. The expansion of provincial jurisdiction over these areas necessitates a policy architecture that explicitly addresses differentiated service delivery models, transitional institutional strengthening, and targeted inclusion mechanisms for women in newly integrated districts.

[56] Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (2024). Judicial Statistics.

Demographic pressures further reinforce the need for policy renewal. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a young and rapidly growing population, increasing demand for education, skills development, employment pathways, health services, and social protection systems. Without deliberate integration of women into these expanding service and labour systems, demographic growth risks deepening existing participation gaps and fiscal pressures rather than contributing to productivity and social stability.

The governance environment has also evolved. Increased emphasis on performance management, results-based budgeting, digital service delivery, and data-driven planning across provincial departments requires alignment of gender objectives with these reforms. The absence of structured integration of gender indicators within departmental scorecards, budget ceilings, and monitoring frameworks under the previous policy limited institutional traction. A revised policy must therefore align gender objectives with the province's broader public sector reform trajectory rather than operating as a parallel policy stream.

Risk exposure has likewise intensified. Recurrent floods, climate variability, fiscal volatility, and service delivery shocks have increased pressure on provincial systems and disproportionately affect households with weaker economic buffers and limited mobility. These realities require clearer integration of gender considerations within resilience planning, emergency response systems, and recovery investments to ensure continuity of services and protection mechanisms.

Finally, evolving legal and institutional developments at provincial and national levels require consolidation within an updated policy framework. New statutes, regulatory instruments, and sector strategies adopted since 2017 require harmonisation, sequencing, and operational alignment to avoid fragmentation and overlap.

Taken together, these factors establish a strong case for revising the WEP not as an expansion of commitments, but as a recalibration of governance architecture, fiscal alignment, institutional accountability, and delivery systems to reflect the province's current administrative realities and forward-looking priorities.

4. Women Empowerment Policy 2026-2030

Vision

A the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where women and girls of all ages are able to access public services, economic opportunities, and legal protection on equal terms across all districts, and where provincial institutions consistently uphold women's rights, safety, and participation as a core element of governance and development.

Mission

To embed women's empowerment within the routine functioning of provincial government by strengthening institutional accountability, aligning budgets and planning with measurable gender outcomes, improving service delivery reach in underserved and Merged Districts, enforcing statutory protections, and removing practical barriers to women's participation in education, work, public decision-making, and digital services, in a manner consistent with the province's social and cultural context and fiscal capacity.

The WEP 2026-2030 is guided by the following strategic objectives:

4.1 Objectives

Objective 1:
Strengthen the institutional and legal framework for consistent delivery of women-related services and protections.

To improve the effectiveness of provincial and district institutions responsible for implementation of women-related laws, policies, and services through clearer mandates, strengthened coordination mechanisms, operational capacity building, and consistent enforcement across all districts, including the Merged Districts.

Objective 2:
Integrate gender priorities into mainstream planning, budgeting, and service delivery systems.

To ensure that departmental plans, development programmes, and budget allocations systematically reflect gender outcomes through improved GRB, expenditure tracking, and alignment of sector investments with measurable service delivery indicators.

Objective 3:
Expand women's participation and access within public systems and economic activity.

To increase women's practical access to education, skills development, employment, financial services, digital platforms, justice mechanisms, and local governance structures by addressing administrative, mobility, documentation, safety, and affordability barriers within existing service delivery frameworks.

Objective 4:
Strengthen data, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms for policy implementation.

To establish reliable gender-disaggregated data systems, performance monitoring frameworks, and reporting mechanisms that support evidence-based decision-making, timely corrective action, and transparent assessment of policy results at provincial and district levels.

4.2 Guiding Principles

Implementation of the WEP 2026-2030 shall be guided by the following principles:

4.3.1 Constitutional and Legal Compliance

All actions under this Policy shall remain consistent with the Constitution of Pakistan, applicable provincial laws, and Pakistan's international obligations, ensuring lawful, equitable, and non-discriminatory service delivery.

4.3.2 Integration within Core Government Systems

Gender priorities shall be embedded within existing planning, budgeting, service delivery, and monitoring systems of the provincial government rather than implemented through parallel structures or standalone programmes.

4.3.3 Fiscal Discipline and Budget Alignment

Policy actions shall be aligned with approved budget ceilings, Annual Development Programme (ADP) processes, and expenditure tracking mechanisms to ensure affordability, sustainability, and value for public resources.

4.3.4 Targeted Outreach Based on Differential Needs

Programme design and service delivery shall recognise variations across districts, rural and merged areas, and vulnerable population groups, ensuring that resource allocation and service models respond to practical access constraints.

4.3.5 Evidence-Based Planning and Performance Management

Decisions shall be guided by reliable administrative data, gender-disaggregated indicators, and periodic performance reviews to support corrective action and accountability.

4.3.6 Decentralised Implementation with Provincial Oversight

Implementation responsibility shall rest primarily with district and line departments, supported by provincial coordination, standard-setting, and oversight mechanisms.

4.3 Policy Components and Implementation Structure

The WEP 2026-2030 is organised around six operational components. These components reflect the principal service delivery and governance domains through which provincial departments, district administrations, and attached entities will plan, budget, and report interventions. Each component consolidates sector responsibilities, clarifies coordination expectations, and provides a structured basis for monitoring implementation across government.

Rather than functioning as standalone programmes, the components are intended to be integrated within existing departmental mandates, development schemes, and regulatory functions.

4.2.1 Economic Participation and Livelihood Security

This component focuses on strengthening women's participation in the provincial economy by improving access to skills development, market linkages, financial services, productive assets, and digital infrastructure. Priority attention will be given to reducing practical barriers such as mobility constraints, time burden, documentation gaps, and access to credit and enterprise services, particularly in rural and Merged Districts. Interventions under this component will align with provincial social protection, labour, skills, and enterprise development frameworks to improve income security and labour market participation.

4.2.2 Social Services Access and Human Development

This component addresses women's access to essential social services across the life cycle, including health, maternal and child health, education, population welfare, emergency relief, transport safety, and social protection. It aims to improve service coverage, availability of female service providers, safe mobility arrangements, retention of girls in secondary education, and continuity of care during emergencies. Institutional participation mechanisms such as school councils, health committees, and community platforms will be strengthened to improve service responsiveness and accountability.

4.2.3 Political Participation and Public Leadership

This component supports women's participation in political processes, representative institutions, and local governance structures by improving access to electoral documentation, voter facilitation, leadership development opportunities, and safe participation environments. It also promotes greater inclusion of women in political party structures, local government forums, and consultative platforms to strengthen representation in public decision-making and policy oversight.

4.2.4 Legal Protection and Access to Justice

This component focuses on strengthening access to justice, protection services, and enforcement of statutory rights. Key areas include improving availability of legal aid, survivor support services, reporting mechanisms, court accessibility, police responsiveness, and coordination among

justice sector institutions. Emphasis will be placed on operationalising statutory mechanisms, improving case management systems, and strengthening institutional capacity at provincial and district levels.

4.2.5 Digital Inclusion and Service Access

This component aims to expand women's access to digital connectivity, devices, digital literacy, and digital public services, with targeted focus on underserved districts and the Merged Districts. It supports integration of gender considerations into e-governance platforms, digital identification systems, financial technology services, and online grievance mechanisms, aligned with the provincial digital transformation agenda.

4.2.6 Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Management

This component integrates gender considerations into disaster preparedness, early warning systems, emergency response, recovery planning, and climate adaptation investments. It prioritises continuity of essential services during emergencies, safe shelter arrangements, health service access, water and sanitation facilities, and inclusion of women in local disaster management and resilience platforms. Alignment will be maintained with provincial climate and disaster management policies.

Implementation and Responsibility Matrix-WEP 2026-2030

Policy Component	Administrative Lead	Supporting Departments	Key Instruments and Delivery Channels	Monitoring and Reporting
Economic Participation and Livelihood Security	Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department	Industries and Commerce Department Labor Department Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority P&D Finance Department Bank of Khyber KP Information Technology Board Local Government Department	Skills development programmes Enterprise facilitation schemes Financial inclusion mechanisms Market linkage platforms Digital payment systems Linkage with social protection programs	Social Welfare Department as lead reporting agency Finance Department for budget execution tracking P&D for scheme monitoring KPCSW for independent oversight
Social Services Access and Human Development	Health Department Elementary and Secondary Education Department	Population Welfare Department Transport Department Social Welfare Department Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Local Government Department P&D	Maternal and child health services Primary healthcare delivery School Infrastructure development Teacher deployment Student transport and safety measures Emergency relief services Community participation mechanisms	Health and Education Departments for sector reporting P&D for development monitoring KPCSW for oversight

Policy Component	Administrative Lead	Supporting Departments	Key Instruments and Delivery Channels	Monitoring and Reporting
Political Participation and Public Leadership	Political Participation and Public Leadership	Home Department National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) Information Department Local Government Training Institutions	Voter registration facilitation CNIC outreach coordination Leadership development initiatives Local council participation mechanisms Public awareness campaigns	Local Government Department for implementation reporting Election Commission coordination inputs KPCSW for oversight
Legal Protection and Access to Justice	Law Department Home Department	Judiciary coordination Police Department Social Welfare Department Prosecution Department District Administration	Legal aid services Women-friendly policing arrangements Survivor support centers Court facilitation systems Operationalization of statutory committees	Law Department for policy compliance monitoring Home Department for service delivery reporting KPCSW for oversight
Digital Inclusion and Service Access	KP Information Technology Board	Finance Department Social Welfare Department NADRA Coordination P&D Line Departments	Digital public service platforms Device access initiatives Connectivity programmes Digital literacy initiatives Electronic payment systems Digital identity services	KPITB for technical reporting Finance Department for ICT expenditure tracking P&D for scheme monitoring KPCSW for oversight
Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Management	PDMA Environment Department	Health Department Local Government Department Irrigation Department Social Welfare Department P&D District Administrations	Early warning systems Emergency shelter management WASH services Health service continuity protocols Recovery grants Compensation mechanisms	PDMA for operational reporting P&D for development monitoring Finance Department for relief and recovery expenditure tracking KPCSW for oversight

5. Policy Prescriptions

Policy prescriptions translate strategic objectives into actionable measures to be implemented through existing departmental mandates, development schemes, regulatory instruments, and service delivery systems. Interventions shall be sequenced and prioritised through annual planning and budget processes.

5.1 Economic Participation and Livelihood Security

The objective of this component is to increase women's participation in productive economic activity, improve income security, and strengthen access to assets and financial services, particularly in rural areas and the Merged Districts.

A. Service Access and Enabling Infrastructure

- Expand availability of community-based childcare facilities through public–private partnerships and integration within social welfare and local government service models, with accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.
- Improve availability of safe and affordable transport options for women in rural and peripheral areas through coordination with transport authorities and local government planning.
- Strengthen coverage of social protection schemes for informal workers, home-based workers, and low-income households by improving registration, outreach, and benefit delivery mechanisms.
- Enforce workplace safety, accessibility, and anti-harassment standards through labour inspection systems and regulatory compliance mechanisms.

B. Market Access, Skills and Enterprise Development

- Integrate women-targeted digital literacy, technical skills, and entrepreneurship modules within existing TEVTA, labour, and enterprise development programmes, with geographic targeting for underserved districts.
- Facilitate entry of women-owned micro and small enterprises into formal markets through simplified registration procedures, advisory services, and linkage with procurement and value chain platforms.
- Promote access to productive inputs and business services for home-based workers and micro-entrepreneurs through coordinated support programmes with relevant departments and financial institutions.
- Rationalise regulatory compliance requirements for micro-enterprises to reduce administrative barriers without compromising statutory safeguards.

C. Financial Inclusion and Asset Security

- Expand access to transaction accounts, digital payment platforms, and government transfer channels for women through simplified onboarding procedures and coordination with financial institutions and NADRA.
- Promote development of credit products suitable for small-scale women entrepreneurs through risk-sharing mechanisms and simplified collateral requirements within regulatory frameworks.

- Strengthen enforcement of women's inheritance, property, and business rights through coordination between revenue administration, legal aid services, and district administrations.
- Support registration and documentation drives to improve formal ownership records for women, particularly in rural and Merged Districts.

D. Institutional Participation and Representation

- Facilitate representation of women in producer groups, cooperatives, chambers, and sector associations through policy guidelines, membership facilitation, and linkage with existing institutional platforms.
- Support formation and registration of women-led associations to enable structured engagement with market actors and public agencies.

5.2 Social Services Access and Human Development

This component focuses on strengthening women's access to essential social services across the life cycle, improving service quality, continuity, and safety, and reducing practical barriers to utilization, particularly in rural districts, the Merged Districts, and underserved communities.

A. Health, Nutrition and Protection Services

- Strengthen coverage and utilization of Sehat Card Plus for women by improving enrolment, referral linkages, and awareness through district health systems, with prioritization of vulnerable households and survivors requiring specialized care.
- Improve service quality and outreach for maternal, neonatal and child health, family planning, adolescent health, and mental health services through facility upgrades, rationalized staffing, and strengthened supply chains.
- Upgrade existing Darul Amans into integrated referral facilities providing coordinated access to health services, legal support, psychosocial care, and disability-accessible infrastructure.
- Institutionalise pre-positioning of essential relief supplies, including dignity and hygiene kits, within PDMA and district contingency planning frameworks to enable rapid deployment during emergencies.
- Strengthen linkages between health services and social protection programmes to ensure continuity of support for women during pregnancy, onset of disability, widowhood, old age, and disaster-related shocks.

B. Education Access, Retention and Safe Mobility

- Expand targeted education support mechanisms to improve enrolment and retention of girls in remote rural areas, minority communities, and the Merged Districts, aligned with provincial education financing schemes.
- Prioritise deployment and retention of female teachers in underserved districts through posting policies, housing support, and incentives, where feasible under existing rules.
- Improve availability of safe transport solutions for students and women accessing services through coordination with local government and relevant transport authorities.
- Strengthen school infrastructure standards relating to safety, sanitation, disability access, and water availability to support attendance and retention.

C. Basic Services and Infrastructure Access

- Improve access to safe water, sanitation, clean energy, and disability-friendly public infrastructure through alignment with municipal service delivery plans and approved development schemes.
- Integrate gender-sensitive and accessibility design standards into public facility construction and rehabilitation projects.

D. Service Delivery Capacity and Outreach

- Strengthen the capacity and deployment of frontline service providers, including Lady Health Workers, Population Welfare field staff, and community outreach personnel, through standardised training, supervision, and logistical support.
- Expand outreach coverage in hard-to-access localities through mobile services and coordinated district-level planning.

E. Community Participation and Local Oversight

- Formalise the participation of women in Parent Teacher Councils, School Management Committees, and health facility committees through notifications, quorum requirements, and reporting protocols.
- Introduce modest, rule-based operational grants for community committees, linked to clearly defined expenditure purposes and audit requirements.
- Strengthen community feedback and grievance mechanisms for service quality monitoring through district administrations and line departments.

F. Transition Pathways to Skills and Employment

- Strengthen linkages between completion of secondary education and access to technical education, digital skills, and market-relevant training programmes to support women's transition into productive employment and entrepreneurship.
- Align counselling and career guidance services with provincial labour market priorities and skills demand.

5.3 Political Participation and Public Decision - Making

This component seeks to improve women's participation in electoral processes, representative institutions, and public decision-making forums by addressing administrative, accessibility, safety, and facilitation barriers that disproportionately affect women in rural districts, the Merged Districts, minority communities, and persons with disabilities.

A. Access, Safety and Accessibility

- Ensure government offices, assembly facilities, and local government premises comply with accessibility standards, including ramps, seating arrangements, signage, and basic assistive facilities.
- Strengthen implementation of workplace conduct and harassment prevention protocols within public offices and elected institutions, with clear reporting and referral mechanisms.
- Strengthen coordination with district administration and law enforcement to facilitate safe participation of women representatives during official engagements and public meetings, within applicable rules and security protocols.

- Improve availability of basic facilities within political and administrative premises to support participation of elderly women and persons with health limitations.

B. Electoral Facilitation and Administrative Support

- Coordinate with relevant agencies to expand CNIC registration, voter facilitation, and documentation services for women in underserved districts through mobile outreach and district-level service planning.
- District administrations shall implement targeted facilitation plans for women's documentation and voter access in hard-to-reach tehsils, with periodic progress reporting.
- Improve accessibility of nomination, verification, and documentation processes for women with disabilities through facilitation desks and simplified formats.
- During elections, district administration and law enforcement shall support election management arrangements to ensure women's lawful right to vote is not obstructed through informal restrictions, and incidents shall be documented for action under applicable law.

C. Institutional Participation and Transparency

- Promote representation of women in the Cabinet and across standing committees, consultative bodies, and local government forums through administrative notification practices and committee assignment guidelines.
- Ensure women members are assigned substantive roles in committee work and district-level consultative processes rather than nominal representation.
- Facilitate hybrid participation mechanisms for official meetings where travel constraints affect participation from distant districts.
- Publish periodic participation statistics disaggregated by gender and district, including identification of Merged District trends, to support performance monitoring.

D. Leadership and Fiscal Engagement

- Facilitate inclusion of women representatives in budget consultations, ADP reviews, and district planning forums to strengthen participation in public resource allocation processes.
- Strengthen coordination between representative forums and statutory oversight mechanisms to monitor participation trends and institutional compliance.

5.4 Legal Protection and Access to Justice

This component focuses on improving women's effective access to justice, protection services, and statutory remedies by strengthening service infrastructure, procedural facilitation, institutional coordination, and enforcement of existing laws, particularly in underserved districts and the Merged Districts.

A. Protection Services and Support Infrastructure

- Ensure predictable budget provision within the Annual Development Programme for operation and maintenance of women shelters, crisis support centres, and referral services, including accessibility upgrades where required.

- Strengthen linkages between survivor support services and social protection mechanisms to facilitate access to medical assistance, mobility support, and emergency relief in eligible cases.
- Standardise minimum facility requirements for safe waiting areas, privacy arrangements, and basic security provisions for female litigants and survivors within court premises in coordination with relevant authorities.

B. Procedural Facilitation and Case Management

- Expand availability of legal aid services, virtual hearings, and electronic filing systems through phased rollout, ensuring accessibility features and facilitation support for litigants facing mobility or documentation barriers.
- Establish district-level legal facilitation desks as a standard service point for guidance on documentation, referrals, and procedural navigation.
- Strengthen implementation of in-camera proceedings in sensitive cases in accordance with applicable law.
- Encourage administrative coordination with prosecution and court management bodies to prioritise timely processing of GBV cases within existing procedural frameworks.
- Strengthen service for women in prison and facilitate them with legal assistance and rehabilitation.

C. Institutional Capacity and Coordination

- Strengthen training programmes for police personnel, prosecution staff, court support staff, health personnel and social welfare officers on gender-sensitive case handling, confidentiality standards, and survivor referral protocols.
- Improve operationalisation and inter-departmental coordination of statutory protection mechanisms at district level through periodic administrative review and reporting.
- Promote balanced deployment of female officers within relevant justice sector services through human resource planning and recruitment policies, subject to applicable rules.

D. Protection of Property and Statutory Rights

- Strengthen coordination between revenue administration, legal aid services, and district administration to improve enforcement of women's inheritance and property rights under existing laws.
- Introduce administrative tracking of inheritance and property dispute cases involving women to identify delays and systemic bottlenecks.
- Facilitate outreach and documentation support for women facing barriers to asserting statutory rights due to lack of formal records.

5.5 Digital Inclusion and Access to Public Services

This component addresses the digital access gap affecting women's ability to use public services, participate in education and the labour market, and access payments and information. The need is heightened by Pakistan's wide mobile and smartphone gender gaps (38% and 49% respectively) and limited internet access among women in the Merged Districts.[57] The focus of this policy is therefore practical: improving women's access to devices, connectivity, digital public services, and safe usage pathways, with priority for underserved districts.

A. Digital Public Services and Assisted Access

- Expand coverage and usability of core digital public service platforms (including complaint and facilitation services) through assisted access arrangements, so women can complete transactions without reliance on informal intermediaries.
- Establish women-friendly assisted digital access points within existing government and community facilities (e.g., service centres, Basic Health Units, schools and other notified locations), with privacy provisions and accessibility features for persons with disabilities.
- Ensure key public-facing digital services are available in local languages and designed for low-literacy use (simple menus, voice/assisted modes where feasible).

B. Connectivity and Device Access in Underserved Districts

- Prioritise underserved districts, including the Merged Districts and remote mountainous areas, in provincial connectivity planning and public Wi-Fi/last-mile initiatives implemented through existing programmes and ADP schemes.
- Facilitate women's access to affordable devices and connectivity packages through targeted schemes where fiscally feasible, linked to education, skills training, and service access objectives.

C. Digital Skills for Service Use and Employability

- Integrate basic digital literacy (use of government services, safe device use, and digital payments) within existing education and skills systems, including girls' secondary education linkages and technical training programmes.
- Use existing KPITB and skills platforms (including district-level centres) to offer practical training focused on employability pathways such as freelancing, e-commerce onboarding, and office productivity skills, with targeted outreach for underserved districts.

D. Digital Payments and Reduced Intermediation

- Strengthen women's access to secure digital payments for government transfers and eligible programme benefits through bank/mobile account onboarding support and assisted registration at service centres.
- Reduce reliance on middlemen by standardising verification and grievance mechanisms for digital payments, including facilitation support at district level.

E. Online Safety and Reporting Pathways

- Establish clear referral and reporting pathways for online harassment and misuse cases through designated helpdesks and coordination with relevant law enforcement arrangements, ensuring confidentiality and timely guidance.

[57] GSMA (2024). Mobile Gender Gap / Smartphone Gender Gap estimates. [Pakistan: 38% and 49% respectively]

- Integrate online safety guidance into existing awareness and training channels (schools, service centres, community outreach) without creating parallel structures.

5.6 Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Management

This component addresses the disproportionate impact of climate shocks and disasters on women and girls, including higher mortality risks, mobility constraints, caregiving responsibilities, and barriers in accessing relief and recovery services.[58] The policy focuses on strengthening disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and institutional participation in a manner that explicitly responds to women's protection, health, livelihood, and documentation needs.

A. Preparedness and Service Readiness for Women

- Ensure provincial and district disaster preparedness plans explicitly incorporate women-specific service requirements, including continuity of maternal and reproductive health services, availability of female medical staff where feasible, privacy arrangements in shelters, and safe sanitation facilities.
- Require shelter design and rehabilitation standards to include separate secure spaces for women and girls, disability-accessible facilities, adequate lighting, and water and hygiene infrastructure.
- Integrate women's protection considerations into district contingency planning, including referral pathways for survivors of violence during emergencies.
- Ensure contingency budgeting reflects the additional operational costs associated with women-specific service arrangements.

B. Early Warning and Information Access for Women

- Disseminate early warning information through channels that effectively reach women, including mobile messaging, community health workers, local radio, and mosque announcements, using simple and locally understood formats.
- Strengthen last-mile outreach mechanisms in remote districts to ensure women receive timely warnings despite mobility and connectivity limitations.

C. Relief, Compensation and Livelihood Recovery for Women

- Ensure relief eligibility criteria explicitly identify women beneficiaries, including widows, women-headed households, pregnant and lactating women, and women with disabilities.
- Strengthen verification and payment mechanisms so that cash assistance and compensation are transferred directly to women beneficiaries wherever administratively feasible, reducing dependency on intermediaries.
- Standardise grievance redressal and appeal procedures for women who face exclusion, documentation gaps, or delayed payments.
- Align livelihood recovery schemes with women's income activities, including livestock, home-based production, and small enterprises.

[58] UNDP (2024). Merged Districts digital access estimates. [Limited internet access among women in Merged Districts]

D. Institutional Participation and Capacity

- Ensure inclusion of designated women representatives in district disaster coordination forums and community disaster management committees through administrative notification procedures.
- Strengthen participation of female staff in disaster preparedness training, simulations, and response coordination within PDMA, district administrations, and line departments.
- Require disaster reporting systems to capture sex-disaggregated beneficiary and impact data to support monitoring and corrective action.

E. Asset Restoration and Legal Facilitation for Women

- Strengthen coordination between revenue administration and relief authorities to facilitate documentation support for women seeking compensation for damaged housing, land use, livestock, and productive assets.
- Introduce simplified facilitation arrangements at district level for women lacking formal ownership records, within applicable legal frameworks.

6. Implementation Arrangements

Implementation of the WEP 2026-2030 shall be led by the Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as the Administrative Department, with execution responsibilities vested in relevant line departments and district administrations in accordance with their respective mandates.

The allocation of departmental roles and delivery responsibilities has been set out in the preceding section on policy components and institutional responsibilities.

Policy actions shall be implemented through existing government systems, including annual departmental planning and budgeting processes, the Annual Development Programme, routine financial reporting and audit mechanisms, and departmental performance monitoring frameworks. No parallel implementation structures shall be created outside approved government arrangements.

Inter-departmental coordination and performance oversight shall be undertaken through the notified institutional governance mechanism, ensuring alignment between sector plans, budget execution, and policy outcomes.

Each department shall integrate relevant policy actions within its annual plans and operational programmes, designate a focal officer for coordination, and submit periodic implementation updates through existing reporting channels.

District administrations shall ensure field-level execution through line departments and established district coordination mechanisms.

6.1 Affirmative Action in Government Human Resource Policies

Women's representation in the provincial civil service, including in policy, planning, budgeting and leadership positions, remains below organisational benchmarks. Strengthening women's participation in public service roles is essential for effective policy implementation and inclusive governance.

In accordance with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Civil Servants (Appointment, Promotion & Transfer) Rules, 1980, applicable service rules, and notifications issued under competent authority, all departments shall adopt measures within their authority to enhance women's representation and career progression. These measures shall be consistent with established service norms and will not contravene statutory requirements or the functions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission.

Affirmative measures shall include:

A. Recruitment and Selection Panels

Departments shall ensure that recruitment and selection boards include balanced representation of women members where feasible within Rule provisions, especially for appointments at Basic Pay Scale (BPS)-17 and above and for specialised technical positions.

B. Priority Consideration in Postings

Where cadre, branch, or organisational requirements permit, departments shall prioritise the posting of qualified women officers to policy, planning, budget, and executive management roles. Priority posting considerations may be factored into internal transfer orders in accordance with the relevant Service Rules and transfer policies.

C. Training and Promotion Pathways

Departments shall nominate eligible women officers for mandatory and promotion-linked training courses offered by the KP Academy for Administrative Training and other recognised institutions, subject to seat availability and eligibility criteria prescribed under the Establishment Division's training policy.

D. Proposals for Rule Amendments

Where service rules or competitive recruitment frameworks administered by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission limit structured representation of women in specific cadres, departments may, through the Administrative Department and Establishment Division, propose appropriate amendments or discretionary provisions that are consistent with merit and service requirements.

E. Career Development Support

Departments shall review internal career development systems to identify and address structural barriers to women's progression, including mentorship, access to stretch assignments, and representation in committees responsible for performance evaluation.

F. Regular Reporting

Departments shall include women's representation and progression indicators in routine human resource reports submitted to the Finance Department and Establishment Division as part of performance monitoring and workforce planning cycles.

These measures do not create special or parallel entry routes; rather, they operationalise existing policy space within service rules to promote equitable representation and strengthen the pipeline of women in managerial, technical and decision-making roles in provincial service..

6.2 Institutional Roles and Functional Alignment

Effective implementation of the WEP 2026-2030 requires clear functional separation between executive delivery, technical coordination, and statutory oversight functions. These roles shall operate within existing legal mandates and administrative arrangements.

A. Executive Implementation and Coordination

The Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as the Administrative Department, shall remain responsible for overall coordination of policy implementation, consolidation of departmental progress, and submission of periodic implementation summaries to the competent forum.

The Women Empowerment Wing within the Department shall function as an internal technical support unit for policy coordination, development of implementation guidance where required, and facilitation of inter-departmental communication. The Wing shall not exercise regulatory or oversight authority over other departments.

B. Planning, Appraisal and Budget Integration

The Planning & Development Department, through its designated sections, shall continue to perform technical appraisal and screening functions for development schemes in accordance with approved planning procedures. This includes application of notified screening tools, guidance to departments during scheme formulation, and alignment of sector proposals with approved policy priorities.

Departments shall remain responsible for ensuring that their development proposals and sector plans reflect policy commitments and comply with applicable planning and budgeting instructions issued by the Planning & Development and Finance Departments.

C. Statutory Oversight and Advisory Role

The KPCSW (KPCSW) shall exercise its statutory mandate to monitor policy implementation, review institutional performance trends, and provide advisory recommendations to the Government.

The Commission may coordinate with district-level statutory mechanisms, where notified, to obtain field-level feedback and identify systemic constraints affecting women's access to services and legal protections.

Annual assessment reports issued by the Commission shall be placed before the competent authority for consideration and policy guidance.

D. Functional Coordination and Information Flow

Coordination between executive departments, planning authorities, and oversight bodies shall be conducted through the institutional governance mechanisms notified under this Policy and through routine government reporting channels. Information sharing shall be structured to avoid duplication, parallel reporting streams, or creation of new administrative layers.

Each institution shall operate strictly within its respective mandate to preserve clarity of accountability and administrative discipline.`

6.3 District-Level Implementation

District administrations shall be responsible for field-level execution of the WEP within their respective jurisdictions, in accordance with approved district development plans, sectoral allocations, and administrative instructions issued by the Government.

Relevant line departments at district level shall integrate applicable policy actions into routine service delivery, district planning exercises, and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring that interventions reach women in rural, remote and Merged District areas.

Where notified under law, District Committees on the Status of Women shall provide advisory input on local implementation challenges and facilitate feedback from communities for onward reporting through prescribed channels. These Committees shall not exercise executive authority.

Monitoring of district-level implementation shall be aligned with existing district reporting and review processes, including development scheme progress reporting and administrative performance reviews, so that policy results are reflected within the normal planning and accountability framework rather than through parallel systems.

6.4 Role of the Provincial Assembly and Women Parliamentary Caucus

The Provincial Assembly of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shall exercise its constitutional role in legislative oversight, budget approval, and accountability of the Executive with respect to the objectives of the WEP.

The Women Parliamentary Caucus, supported by the Provincial Assembly Secretariat, may facilitate cross-party consultation on gender-related legislation, review policy implementation trends, and raise matters of public importance relating to women's rights, access to services, and institutional performance.

Members of the Assembly may utilize existing parliamentary instruments, including questions, resolutions, committee proceedings and budget debates, to ensure that departmental commitments under the Policy are examined in a transparent and accountable manner.

Capacity-building or policy support initiatives for legislators, where required, shall be undertaken strictly within the rules and procedures of the Assembly and without creating parallel governance arrangements.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting under the WEP 2026-2030 shall be undertaken through existing government planning, development monitoring, and performance review systems to ensure that policy commitments translate into measurable improvements in service delivery, access, and outcomes for women across the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including rural areas and the Merged Districts.

The monitoring framework shall focus on tracking implementation progress, identifying service delivery gaps affecting women, and supporting evidence-based policy and budget decisions. No parallel reporting structures shall be created outside approved government mechanisms.

Monitoring arrangements shall remain aligned with the Quarterly Progress Reporting cycle of the ADP and annual departmental performance reviews, so that women-related outcomes are assessed alongside physical and financial progress of government programmes.

7.1 Monitoring Framework & Indicators

A Policy Indicator Framework shall be notified for this Policy to enable consistent and comparable measurement across sectors. The framework shall comprise:

- a limited set of core provincial indicators reflecting priority outcomes for women; and
- sector-specific indicators aligned with departmental mandates.

Indicators shall, as far as practicable, be drawn from existing administrative systems and official statistical publications to avoid duplication and unnecessary reporting burdens.

Baseline values shall be established using the most recent available data maintained by departments and official statistical sources. Where additional baseline information is required, it shall be generated through routine departmental systems within approved resources.

7.2 Data Standards and Disaggregation

All departments shall report women-related indicators using sex-disaggregated data as the minimum standard.

Disaggregation by district and Merged District status shall be applied for planning, equity analysis, and resource prioritisation. Additional disaggregation by age and disability shall be applied where such data is captured within existing service delivery systems and reporting formats.

The Bureau of Statistics and relevant departments may provide technical support to strengthen data consistency, definitions, and reliability across sectors.

7.3 Reporting Responsibilities and Flow

Reporting under this Policy shall follow established departmental and provincial reporting arrangements:

- Line Departments shall integrate relevant policy indicators into their routine monitoring systems and submit progress information through the same channels used for departmental performance reporting and ADP progress monitoring.

- The Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shall consolidate departmental inputs and prepare an annual implementation summary for the competent authority, highlighting progress trends, implementation constraints, and recommended corrective measures. The Department's role shall remain coordination and consolidation and shall not duplicate sector monitoring functions.

- The KPCSW shall, in exercise of its statutory mandate, independently review implementation trends and service access outcomes for women and issue advisory recommendations to the Government. The Commission may publish periodic assessments in accordance with its governing law.

- District-level information shall flow through existing district administration and line department reporting channels. Where District Committees on the Status of Women are notified, they may provide structured feedback to support identification of local constraints affecting women's access to services, without creating parallel reporting systems.

7.4 Review and Corrective Action

Policy performance shall be reviewed through:

- an annual review aligned with the provincial planning and ADP review cycle; and
- a mid-term review to assess overall progress, identify systemic implementation issues, and recommend course corrections within the policy period.

Corrective actions may include administrative directions, refinement of implementation arrangements, reprioritisation of interventions within annual plans, and strengthening of service delivery mechanisms affecting women.

7.5 Transparency and Citizen Feedback

Departments shall utilise existing grievance redressal and complaint handling mechanisms to ensure that women can report service delivery issues and access facilitation without intermediary dependence.

Where digital systems are already operational, departments may leverage such platforms to improve accessibility, response time, and record-keeping. Public disclosure of consolidated progress summaries may be undertaken through official channels to promote transparency and public confidence.

7.6 Review Schedule and Planning Alignment

Implementation monitoring and policy review under the WEP 2026-2030 shall be aligned with the provincial planning and development cycle and the Provincial Sustainable Development Framework (2025–2030). Routine progress reporting shall follow the established Quarterly Progress Reporting cycle of the Annual Development Programme and annual departmental performance reviews, so that policy outcomes are assessed alongside physical and financial progress of government programmes. Consolidated annual implementation summaries shall

inform provincial development reviews and resource prioritisation. A mid-term policy review may be undertaken during the policy period, subject to approval of the competent authority, to assess progress, identify systemic constraints, and recommend corrective measures. Detailed operational timelines and reporting formats shall be notified separately through administrative instructions, as required.

7.7 Use of Monitoring Evidence for Decision-Making

Information generated through monitoring of the WEP shall be utilised to support informed decision-making within existing government processes.

Monitoring evidence shall inform:

- Annual planning and budget prioritisation, including refinement of sectoral proposals and identification of interventions requiring enhanced allocation or corrective attention.
- Administrative review and course correction, through issuance of instructions, adjustment of implementation arrangements, and removal of operational bottlenecks affecting service delivery to women.
- Policy review and refinement, based on independent assessment and advisory inputs provided by the KPCSW in accordance with its statutory mandate.
- Inter-departmental coordination, by highlighting areas requiring improved alignment between sector responsibilities and field-level execution.
- Legislative oversight, through availability of consolidated implementation evidence for consideration by the competent forums of the Provincial Assembly.

Use of monitoring evidence shall remain embedded within established planning, budget, and accountability mechanisms of the Government and shall not create parallel decision-making structures.

8. Commencement, Application and Amendment

8.1 Commencement

This Policy shall come into force with effect from the date of its approval by the competent authority.

8.2 Application and Implementation

This Policy shall apply to all Provincial Departments, Attached Departments, Autonomous Bodies, and District Administrations of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to the extent relevant to their respective mandates. Implementation shall be carried out by the concerned departments in accordance with their approved Rules of Business, financial rules, service rules, and delegated powers.

Coordination and consolidation of implementation shall be undertaken by the Zakat, Ushr, Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in accordance with the implementation arrangements contained in this Policy.

8.3 Supersession

Upon commencement of this Policy, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa WEP 2017 shall stand superseded to the extent of inconsistency.

8.4 Interpretation and Amendment

In case of any question relating to the interpretation or application of this Policy, the matter shall be referred to the competent authority through the Administrative Department. The Government may amend, modify or update this Policy, as and when required, with the approval of the competent authority.

9. Policy Notification

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
ZAKAT, USHR, SOCIAL WELFARE, SPECIAL EDUCATION& WOMEN EMPOWERMENT DEPARTMENT

Dated: Peshawar, the 23rd February, 2026

NOTIFICATION

No. GS-1/SWD/1-31/WEP/IMP/2025 684 Consequent upon approval of Provincial Cabinet during 47th Meeting dated 11.02.2026, the Competent Authority i.e. Secretary, Social Welfare Department is pleased to notify **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Women Empowerment Policy 2026-30**, for implementation of all concerned, with immediate effect, in the best public interest.

Sd/-
Secretary to Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,
Zakat, Usher, Social Welfare, Special Education &
Women Empowerment Department

Ends: No. Even No. & Date: -

Copy forwarded to the:-

1. PSO to Hon'ble Chief Minister, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
2. Principal Secretary to Governor, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
3. PSO to Chief Secretary, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
4. All Administrative Secretaries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
5. Chairperson, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women.
6. Section Officer, Cabinet Administration Department, Peshawar.
7. PS to Secretary, Social Welfare Department.
8. Directors (Settled & Merged), SW, SE & WE Department.
9. All Heads of Autonomous Bodies, Social Welfare Department.
10. Master File.

23/2/26
Syeda Nudrat
Gender Specialist – I
Social Welfare Department.

Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Islamabad

UN WOMEN

FOR ALL
WOMEN
AND GIRLS