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# **SUMMARY of the Article “Pakistan at 77,” by Samuel Rizk, Dawn, August 14th, 2024**

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In this reflective piece, Samuel Rizk, the **UNDP** resident representative in Pakistan, offers a nuanced analysis of Pakistan’s journey as it marks its 77th Independence Day. Despite the nation’s pride and natural beauty, Pakistan faces significant challenges as it recovers from the dual blows of the Covid-19 pandemic and the devastating 2022 floods. The country remains highly vulnerable to climate change and continues to struggle with macroeconomic instability, debt, and security concerns. These issues are compounded by unresolved governance challenges, which hinder the nation’s ability to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. The article underscores the urgency of addressing these challenges, especially as Pakistan has only six years left to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Alarmingly, the country is projected to achieve only 35 out of 169 targets, with poverty at 40 percent and significant gender disparities. The literacy rate among women and girls is a mere 46 percent, and nearly 22 million children are out of school. Rizk highlights three critical areas of focus for Pakistan’s future: investing in human capital, particularly by empowering women and youth; preparing for a resilient, sustainable economy that adapts to climate challenges; and enhancing Pakistan’s global presence by committing to human rights, civic engagement, and strong trade practices. By addressing these areas, Pakistan can unlock its potential and strengthen its position on the global stage, ultimately creating a more equitable, peaceful, and prosperous nation.

## ***Easy/Short SUMMARY:***

This article discusses Pakistan’s challenges and opportunities as it celebrates its 77th Independence Day. The country is still dealing with the effects of Covid-19,

the 2022 floods, and ongoing economic and security issues. With six years left to achieve its development goals, Pakistan faces high poverty, gender inequality, and low literacy rates. The article suggests three key areas for improvement: investing in people's education and skills, building a sustainable economy that can handle climate change, and increasing Pakistan's role in global affairs. By focusing on these areas, Pakistan can become a stronger and more prosperous nation.

## ***SOLUTIONS of The Problem:***

### **Investment in Human Capital**

Enhance educational opportunities and vocational training, particularly for women and youth, to unlock economic potential and foster future business leaders.

### **Climate Adaptation and Mitigation**

Develop and implement more ambitious climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, focusing on renewable energy and sustainable practices to build a resilient economy.

### **Gender Equality Initiatives**

Implement policies that ensure equal participation of women in the economy, aiming to reduce gender disparities and increase overall GDP.

### **Educational Reforms**

Focus on reducing the number of out-of-school children by improving access to education and increasing literacy rates, especially among girls.

### **Youth Empowerment Programs**

Create programs that empower youth entrepreneurs, linking technical and vocational training with future-ready jobs to enhance productivity and innovation.

## **Global Engagement and Diplomacy**

Strengthen Pakistan's global presence by actively participating in international forums, promoting human rights, and building strong trade relationships.

## **Economic Diversification**

Diversify the economy by investing in sectors such as technology, renewable energy, and agriculture to reduce dependency on traditional industries and enhance economic resilience.

## **Strengthening Governance**

Address governance issues through reforms that ensure transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in decision-making processes, laying the groundwork for sustainable development.

## **Public-Private Partnerships**

Encourage collaboration between the government and the private sector to drive innovation and implement large-scale development projects, particularly in infrastructure and energy.

## **Social Safety Nets**

Expand social safety nets to protect vulnerable populations from economic shocks and ensure that no one is left behind in the nation's development journey.

## ***IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the Article:***

- *Pakistan is recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2022 floods.*
- *The country is critically vulnerable to climate change.*
- *Pakistan needs \$53 billion to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the next six years but is projected to achieve only 35 out of*

169 targets.

- *Poverty stands at 40 percent.*
- *Nearly 22 million children are out of school.*
- *The literacy rate among women and girls is 46 percent.*
- *60 percent of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30.*
- *Pakistan's GDP could increase by \$251 billion by 2025 if women are equally integrated into the economy.*
- *40 million people in Pakistan are living without electricity.*
- *Pakistan has experienced a macroeconomic cliff-hanger in 2023, showing signs of gradual improvement.*
- *Pakistan has fallen from medium to low human development in the 2024 UNDP Human Development Report, with Afghanistan being the only other South Asian nation in this category.*
- *Human Development Index (HDI) measures health, education, and income and Pakistan's decline signifies a challenging socio-economic environment.*
- *Pakistan's climate adaptation is no longer a choice, with 40 million people without electricity needing a just transition to a greener economy.*
- *Pakistan's natural resources and a vibrant private sector are key assets in promoting renewable, innovative energy solutions.*
- *Pakistan has a rapidly growing youth population, with 60 percent under the age of 30, presenting both opportunities and challenges.*
- *The country requires significant investments in human capital, particularly in connecting youth to future-ready jobs through formal, technical, and vocational training.*
- *Pakistan's voice on the global stage is crucial, especially with multilateralism and global cooperation facing challenges such as gridlock, polarization, and protectionism.*
- *The United Nations Summit for the Future in September 2024 will address some of these global concerns, highlighting Pakistan's potential role in the international community.*

## ***MCQs from the Article:***

### ***1. How many years are left for Pakistan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?***

A. 5



- B. 6
- C. 7
- D. 10

**2. What percentage of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30?**

- A. 50%
- B. 55%
- C. 60%
- D. 65%

**3. What is Pakistan's projected achievement out of the 169 Sustainable Development Goals?**

- A. 50 targets
- B. 45 targets
- C. 35 targets
- D. 60 targets

**4. How many children are out of school in Pakistan, according to the article?**

- A. 10 million
- B. 22 million
- C. 30 million
- D. 40 million

**5. What could be the potential GDP gain for Pakistan by 2025 if women are equally integrated into the economy?**

- A. \$150 billion
- B. \$200 billion
- C. \$251 billion
- D. \$300 billion

## VOCABULARY:

1. *Vulnerable* (□□□□□): Susceptible to physical or emotional harm.
2. *Macroeconomic* (□□□□□): Related to the large-scale economic factors of a country.
3. *Abatement* (□□□): The reduction or removal of something.
4. *Resilience* (□□□): The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.
5. *Disparity* (□□□): A great difference.
6. *Trajectory* (□□□): The path followed by an object or a process.
7. *Adaptation* (□□□□□□ □□ □□□□□): The process of adjusting to new conditions.
8. *Mitigation* (□□□□): The action of reducing the severity of something.
9. *Endowed* (□□□□□): Provided with a quality, ability, or asset.
10. *Prosperous* (□□□□□□): Successful in material terms; flourishing.
11. *Civic Engagement* (□□□□□□ □□□□): Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.
12. *Institutional Reforms* (□□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□): Changes made to the structures and processes of an institution to improve its function.
13. *Polarisation* (□□□□□□): Division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs.
14. *Interdependence* (□□□□□□ □□□□□): The dependence of two or more people or things on each other.
15. *Sustainable Development* (□□□□ □□□□□□□): Economic development that is conducted without depletion of natural resources.
16. *Inequity* (□□□□□□□□): Lack of fairness or justice.
17. *Inclusive* (□□□□): Including all the services or items normally expected or required.
18. *Connectivity* (□□□□□): The state or extent of being connected or interconnected.
19. *Gridlock* (□□□□□): A situation of very severe traffic congestion or blockage in a system.
20. *Ambition* (□□□): A strong desire to do or achieve something.

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**Samuel Rizk**

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I JOINED UNDP Pakistan one year ago, and celebrating Aug 14 was one of my first activities. Dressed in green and white with flags all around, colleagues chanted “Pakistan Zindabad”, a message I heard all around the country as I made my way from Karachi and Lahore, to Quetta and Peshawar, to upper Chitral, Hunza and Gilgit. From glaciers to shorelines, and everything in-between, Pakistan is a proud nation, blessed with its beautiful geography, but mostly with its people.

Pakistan at 77 is also complicated. Still recovering from Covid 19 and a devastating 2022 flood, it is critically vulnerable to climate change, has survived a macroeconomic cliff-hanger in 2023 that is slowly showing signs of abatement, and is facing debt and security challenges that leave people and authorities alike on edge. Linger in the background are persistent reform questions which, if resolved, will fix the fundamental governance architecture that steadies the country on an inclusive, sustainable development path.

Data reveals this complicated storyline with more nuance. With six years remaining to realise the Sustainable Development Goals, and \$53 billion required to do so, alarm bells are ringing with 40 per cent poverty, gaping gender disparities, with Pakistan projected to achieve only 35 out of 169 development targets. Pakistan at 77 is a young country, literally and metaphorically, with 60pc of a rapidly growing population under the age of 30, but with nearly 22 million children out of school and a mere 46pc literacy rate among women and girls.

After decades in upward trajectory in the Human Development Index (measuring health, education and income), Pakistan has fallen from medium to low human development in the 2024 UNDP Human Development Report, with Afghanistan being the only other South Asian nation in this category.

Three areas stand out as particularly promising.

Admittedly, Pakistan is greater than the sum of its statistics, a country with substantial ambition and potential, appearing dormant at times, and masking underlying factors of resilience and connectivity. Among many critical development priorities, three areas stand out as particularly promising:

The first centres around people. Investing in Pakistan's human capital is an investment in its present and future. At the dawn of the republic, Pakistan's founding father, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, stated: "...if we want to make this great state of Pakistan happy and prosperous, we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, and especially of the masses and the poor". Pakistan's GDP could gain \$251bn by 2025 if women are as equally connected to the economy as men. And, away from seeing a youth bulge as a security or poverty risk, domestic investment and productivity can be turbocharged with youth entrepreneurs at the centre, skilled not only for their individual benefit, but as future business leaders. Connecting formal, technical and vocational training to future-ready jobs guarantees a significant return on investment, especially when anticipating a more digitised future of work in Pakistan and globally.

The second area must be readying Pakistan for an economy that is as sustainable as it is resilient in the face of inevitable storms. While Pakistan's climate adaptation is no longer a choice, identifying more ambitious mitigation targets is a global obligation that Pakistan must undertake. With 40m living without electricity, a just, equitable transition to a green(er) economy powered by





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cleaner, less carbon-dependant energy is possible in a country endowed with abundant natural resources, and a vibrant private sector committed to renewable, innovative solutions.

The third area foresees Pakistan's voice in a global context, where multilateralism and interdependence have given way to gridlock, polarisation, protectionism, and uncertainty — concerns tabled for the United Nations Summit for the Future in September.

Prosperity for Pakistan will be strengthened by a country fully present and active on the global scene, committed to fundamental human rights and broad civic engagement, aligned with climate targets, fortified by strong trade — measures that start at home and resonate beyond borders. With critical socioeconomic and institutional reforms already underway, staying the course will project Pakistan as an attractive regional and global connectivity hub.

Pakistan at 77 is a complex development mosaic that I've come to learn and appreciate deeply over the past year. We will accompany our national partners and the broader development community along this journey, determined to leave no one behind, resolved to see a Pakistan that is as equitable and inclusive as it is peaceful and prosperous.

The writer is the resident representative of UNDP in Pakistan.

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