

*Sindh and the
Demographic Challenges
that Plague its Future*

Ryan Montbleau
Sindhi Foundation
Washington, DC
July 16, 2016

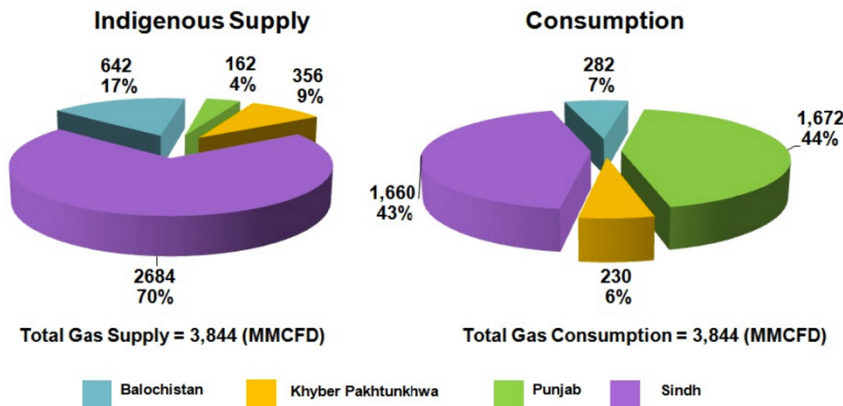
Overview

In the world today, certain nations and groups of people continue to prosper off the marginalization of others. This is a fact of life for Sindhis in Sindh, Pakistan, who are increasingly faced with adverse conditions created by those around them. This report serves to bring attention to issues facing the Sindhi people and provide explanations of how this injustice has grown. While the analysis may not be as in depth as a longer study, the points made will be used to raise awareness of a topic that continues to be brushed away from the international eye. As you will see below, demographic challenges facing the Sindhi people vary. For this reason, I will try to simplify their distinctions through separate sections. The Sindhi people have been stripped of their voice, making it the duty of all people to speak on their behalf.

Challenges in Natural Resource Extraction

Often, possession of a good or resource means personal benefit from that same resource. However, the opposite is true for the Sindhi people. Whereas those in Sindh sit upon the richest land of resources in Pakistan, wealth generated from their extraction is funneled away from the Sindhi people to those of other ethnicities and provinces. While over 50% of all oil fields in Pakistan reside in Sindh, the majority of provincial people still live in impoverished conditions.¹ This problem extends past the oil industry into gas production as well. As reported by DAWN, “even in the gas producing districts, where gas pipelines pass through villages, not a single household has a gas supply connection.”² While extraction and production processes unfold in their backyards, many Sindhis never see the benefits of this invaluable addition to the Pakistani economy. As seen in Graph 1, Sindhi efforts in energy production far exceed the value of energy that is returned to the province.³ It is this unequal work-return relationship that must be addressed.

Graph 1



¹ “Pakistan's Sindh Province”

² “Poverty in Oil Rich Districts of Sindh”

³ “Investment Opportunities in Oil & Gas”

Responsible for a quarter of the national population, the location of Pakistan's largest megacity (Karachi), and the most urbanized province in the country, Sindh and its rural areas still face oil and gas injustice.⁴ The fruits of hard labor are not enjoyed by the Sindhi people, but are rather used to sustain those far off in Punjab. The demographic challenges in the energy sector continue to plague Sindh's right to these natural resources and the energy wellbeing of Sindhis as a whole. For this injustice to disappear, Pakistan must cease its inequitable energy division between the provinces.

Health Challenges Associated with Unfair Resource Extraction

Before moving to the next area of demographic challenges facing Sindh, it is important to note the health issues associated with natural resource extraction in the Sindh province. While Sindhis, mostly in rural areas, continue to be stripped of their resources with little to no compensation, they are the main recipients of extraction hazards, health problems, and environmental contamination. As reported by Dawn, "[some Sindhis] complain the use of specific chemicals during drilling for extraction of oil and gas has contaminated the underground potable water, causing a variety of serious health problems."⁵ While those in other provinces enjoy the growth of oil and gas activity, Sindhis face the repercussions associated with extraction. Even worse, Sindhis see little to no return to alleviate their suffering. It is this unequal distribution of responsibility that must be eradicated before Sindh is overcome with unmanageable obstacles.

Challenges in the Job Industry

Despite their region's crucial role in the Pakistani economy, Sindhi people do not share in equal employment opportunities throughout the province. According to one local by the name of Tanseem Pasha, "companies offer only low-paid jobs to the local people, [such as] watchmen, gatekeepers, or laborers, while management level positions are given to those who belong to influential locals or other provinces."⁶ Even in their own province and pertaining to their own resources, Sindhi people rarely have access to substantial job opportunities. In order for Sindh to gather strength as a province and gain an equal standing within Pakistan, businesses and companies within the province must emphasize the hiring of Sindhis for these employment opportunities. If foreign individuals continue to saturate the job market, Sindhi people will further lose control of the economic activity that is happening within their region.

Challenges between Urban and Rural Sindh

While there are many demographic challenges facing Sindh, it is intra-province inequality that must be examined. Aside from the inequitable circumstances separating Sindh from Punjab, Karachi and rural Sindh are also in sharp contrast. While Sindh's capital, Karachi, is responsible for over half of all commercial activity in Pakistan, there continues to be

⁴ "Sindh Board of Investment"

⁵ "Poverty in Oil Rich Districts of Sindh"

⁶ "Poverty in Oil Rich Districts of Sindh"

widespread poverty throughout rural Sindh.⁷ Instead of wealth permeating throughout the region, most economic activity and financial benefit circulate in the capital alone. While Karachi inhabitants boast of lavish homes, modern hotels, and contemporary malls, areas only a few hundred miles away seem to be from a different time and an entirely different country.⁸ Instead of places for leisure and new gyms, rural living conditions consist of one-room huts, lacking proper hygiene facilities and housing overcrowded families.⁹



(Karachi at Night¹⁰)



(Rural Sindh¹¹)

The evident dichotomy between urban and rural living standards and economic opportunity have become the norm. As Karachi continues to progress, rural Sindh is falling farther back into oblivion. What is even more troubling, is that rural Sindh is directly supporting Karachi's livestock and agriculture needs.¹² However, very little is felt in return for these efforts as rural regions lack mutual aid and development. This widening gap is not only creating distinct economic circumstances, but is also splitting up Sindhi culture as well. What was once a unified province, is now becoming a stark contrast of contemporary Sindhis with the means to succeed and more traditional Sindhis who have been left out of modern progress.

Education

Along with the economic disparity between rural and urban Sindh, inequality in educational opportunities also adds to the growing divide within the province. Literacy rate among Sindhis in urban and rural regions continues to pose a threat to future reunification. As

⁷ "Pakistan's Sindh Province"

⁸ "Urban-Rural Divide in Sindh"

⁹ "Urban-Rural Divide in Sindh"

¹⁰ "AWESOME PICTURES of KARACHI"

¹¹ "How Aid Can Work Better for the Poorest People"

¹² "Urban-Rural Divide in Sindh"

seen in Graph 2, while urban literacy rate in Sindh follows closely with urban literacy rate in Pakistan as a whole, it is rural levels that show evident issues.¹³ When looking at urban-rural literacy statistics, not only is there a provincial-national difference, but there is an evident gender

Graph 2

Table 2. Literacy Rate (10 years and above, by percentage)

2012-2013

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pakistan	82	69	76	64	37	51	71	48	60
Sindh	84	70	77	59	22	42	72	47	60
Badin	62	38	51	47	17	33	50	21	36

disparity as well. While rural, male literacy rate in Sindh only trails rural, male literacy rate in Pakistan by 5%, female rates show a much larger divide. While 37% of rural females nationwide remain literate, only 22% of females in rural Sindh maintain this skill. That is a 15% difference in literacy rate, and when compared to urban levels, rural woman in Sindh trail urban woman in Sindh by 48%. A similar divide between urban and rural men in Sindh also exists. Clearly, access to education for rural populations is much more difficult than for their urban counterparts. One cannot expect the urban-rural divide to disappear if this educational inequality persists into the future. Without the proper tools to succeed, those in rural Sindh seem threatened with greater isolation and adversity.

Human Development

When looking at the Human Development Index (HDI) of Pakistan, it must be understood the national advancement does not mirror what is occurring in the provinces. Much like the challenges explained above, Sindh lacks the proper attention and management to remain equal.¹⁴ While Punjab and other provinces steadily rise in their human development, Sindh continues to suffer and be left behind. As reported by UNPO, a startling problem that is facing Sindh today is infant mortality rate in rural regions.¹⁵ According to Al-Jazeera, a reporter for UNPO, “having no means of transport [to the hospital] and no money for the journey adds to the number of dead babies” in Sindh.¹⁶ Along with this, malnutrition in babies has continued to rise throughout the province, which poses a constant threat to family security and survival.¹⁷ Even more troubling, is the fact that many more lives will be lost before these problems are fixed. According to UNPO, “many structural problems in the region causing this dire situation do not seem likely to improve, mainly due to the government’s lack of action.”¹⁸ It is not simply that these problems exist, but that they are known to exist and are pushed away from being addressed.

¹³ “Pakistan's Sindh Province”

¹⁴ “Human Development Index”

¹⁵ “Sindh: Malnutrition and Infant Mortality Remain Problematic in the Region”

¹⁶ “Sindh: Malnutrition and Infant Mortality Remain Problematic in the Region”

¹⁷ “Sindh: Malnutrition and Infant Mortality Remain Problematic in the Region”

¹⁸ “Sindh: Malnutrition and Infant Mortality Remain Problematic in the Region”

Sindh continues to suffer from slow human development, while provinces such as Punjab receive greater attention.¹⁹ Even when legally ordered to Sindh, development projects rarely get off the ground and are brushed under-the-rug. As stated by Ishaq Soomro, program officer of the Participatory Development Initiative, “the locals living in the oil producing districts allege that most of the oil firms have failed to launch development projects for provision of gas, electricity, health, education, [and] sanitation facilities in their respective areas.”²⁰ While it is the fault of others for these injustices, Sindhis are still faced with the consequences of extraction and other processes. More than this, those who are responsible refuse to acknowledge the hardship Sindhis face and offer support in their suffering. It is this fact that makes the situation in Sindh so troubling and in need of repair. Before Sindhis can receive the justice they deserve, Pakistan must hold accountable those actually responsible for these issues.

Conclusion

While this report attempts to raise awareness of the demographic challenges facing Sindhis, it by no means encapsulates all the suffering and injustice that occurs in Sindh. When looking at the issues above, it is evident that their resolution should not lie on the backs of Sindhis, but must be resolved through greater government action and a breakdown of the current social system. If these problems are left for the Sindhis to face alone, the most likely outcome will be a continuation of the injustice and an increase in the current divide that plagues the future of the province. Without the proper tools to succeed and a lack of an equal system, the people of Sindh will only further separate and lose the unified culture they are known for. If this social epidemic continues without change, traditional Sindhi culture will dissolve and a new social makeup will take hold. As members and supporters of Sindh, we cannot let another community be dismantled, a culture deformed, or a future destroyed. We must take action.

¹⁹ “Human Development Index”

²⁰ “Poverty in Oil Rich Districts of Sindh”

Sources

AWESOME PICTURES of KARACHI That You Might Have Missed. (2015). Retrieved from <http://pkonweb.com/2015/12/awesome-pictures-of-karachi-you-might-have-missed/>

How aid can work better for the poorest people. Retrieved from <https://www.devex.com/news/how-aid-can-work-better-for-the-poorest-people-85281>

Human Development Index: Sindh has slowest growth in provinces. (2016, January 02). Retrieved from <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1020584/human-development-index-sindh-has-slowest-growth-in-provinces/>

Investment Opportunities in Oil & Gas. Retrieved from <http://www.reconnectpakistan.com/InvestmentOpportunitiesinOilGas.aspx>

Kronstadt, K. A. (2015, October 29). Pakistan's Sindh Province. Retrieved from <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/sindh.pdf>

Poverty in oil-rich districts of Sindh. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.dawn.com/news/967020/poverty-in-oil-rich-districts-of-sindh>

Sindh Board of Investment | About Sindh | Sindh Economy. Retrieved from <http://www.sbi.gos.pk/sindh-economy.php>

Sindh: Malnutrition and Infant Mortality Remain Problematic in the Region. Retrieved from <http://unpo.org/article/18967>

Urban–Rural Divide in Sindh. (2014). Retrieved from <http://induschronicle.com.pk/Urban-Rural-Divide-in-Sindh.html>