

Wide gap between male, female literacy rate: report

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ISLAMABAD, June 10: Although women's education witnessed a major improvement in the 1990s, still Pakistan is considered to have a largest gender gap in literacy ratio.

The Pakistan Education and School Atlas, which was published recently for the first time having maps and graphics of all the schools in the country, has shown male literacy at 60 per cent and female at 36 per cent.

It said there was a sharp progress of education among women with the literacy rate rising from 16 per cent in 1980 to 21 per cent in 1990 and jumping to 33 per cent in 1997.

In the 1990s, an emphasis on female education pushed the literacy rate up by 1.5 per year.

According to the atlas, the total number of schools in the country is 182,636; 149,280 in the public and 33,356 in the private sector. There are 142,308 primary schools, out of which 127,709 are in the public and 14,599 in the private sector. The number of middle schools is 25,461 — 12,984 government and 12,477 in the private sector.

The number of higher and secondary schools is 14,867, out of which 8,587 are in the public and 6,280 in the private sector.

The total enrolment is stated to be 21,897,961 — 16,086,902 in the public and 5,811,059 in the private sector. As many as 14,124,819 enrolment are in the primary level, 3,409,704 in the middle and 4,363,438 in high and higher secondary school levels.

In 1947, the country was faced with overwhelming problems in

education. But it not only maintained the inherited institutions but also significantly expanded the education sector by establishing new schools, colleges and universities.

At the time of independence, there were about 8,413 primary schools and 17,800 primary schoolteachers. However, in 1998, the number of primary schools increased to 163,746 with 374,500 primary teachers. Despite the increase, the education services still remain inequitably distributed among income groups, urban, rural regions, male female.

Less than one million students were enrolled in schools in 1947. In 1998, more than 15 million school-age children were enrolled only at the primary level and eight million children were out of schools in 2001. Participation rate was 84 per cent.

Though the literacy rate has increased from 16.4 per cent in 1951 to 49.51 per cent (estimated) in 2001, still 48.8 million people remained illiterate.

Though the overall literacy rate is just about 50 per cent, there are some sharp dividing lines that mask pockets of strengths and great ignorance.

Another dividing line is between urban city dwellers and rural villagers.

Urban literacy jumped from 47 per cent in 1981 to 65 per cent in 1997.

Rural literacy has risen from 17 per cent to 34 per cent in the same period and even in 2001 remained below the urban rate of two decades ago.