

Education and development in the Karakorum: educational expansion and its impacts in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan

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EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE KARAKORUM: EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION AND ITS IMPACTS IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN, PAKISTAN

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With 7 figures and 2 tables

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Summary: Despite countless political declarations of commitment and continued efforts to improve rural education in the Global South, little progress has been made in the last decades. Some parts of the Gilgit-Baltistan Region in northern Pakistan constitute a rare exception in this respect. The analysis of this instructive example of a successful educational expansion allows for identifying key facilitating factors which made possible here what was doomed to fail elsewhere. Starting from very low education levels only six decades ago, parts of the region today are among the educational front-runners of Pakistan. Various education sector initiatives of the government, non-government institutions, denominational networks and the private sector have improved access to education and created new educational opportunities. This educational expansion has not been a homogeneous and linear process but is characterized by variegated ruptures, inequalities and disparities along regional, denominational, socio-economic, inter- and intra-generational as well as gendered lines. Many households could largely benefit from the educational opportunities in form of off-farm income generation and professional employment, but a group of continuously poor and educationally marginalized is threatened to be left behind.

Zusammenfassung: Trotz unzähliger politischer Absichtserklärungen und anhaltender Bemühungen, die Bildungssituation in ländlichen Regionen des Globalen Südens zu verbessern, wurden in den letzten Jahrzehnten dabei nur geringe Fortschritte erreicht. Teile der Region Gilgit-Baltistan im Norden Pakistans stellen eine der wenigen Ausnahmen in dieser Hinsicht dar. Eine Analyse dieses aufschlussreichen Beispiels einer erfolgreich verlaufenden Bildungsexpansion erlaubt es, entscheidende Erfolgsfaktoren zu identifizieren, die hier ermöglichten, was in vielen anderen Regionen bislang nicht realisiert werden konnte. Ausgehend von sehr niedrigen Bildungsraten konnten einige Gebiete Gilgit-Baltistans innerhalb von nur etwa sechs Jahrzehnten zu den führenden Bildungsregionen Pakistans aufschließen. Durch zahlreiche Bildungssektor-Initiativen von Seiten der pakistanischen Regierung, Nicht-Regierungsorganisationen, konfessionellen Netzwerken und dem Privatsektor wurde der Zugang zu Bildung verbessert und neue Bildungschancen geschaffen. Der Bildungsexpansionsprozess verlief jedoch nicht homogen und linear, sondern ist charakterisiert durch vielfältige Brüche, Ungleichheiten und regionale, konfessionelle, sozio-ökonomische, inner- und intergenerationelle sowie Gender-bezogene Disparitäten. Viele Haushalte konnten stark von den neuen Bildungsmöglichkeiten profitieren, etwa in Form von formaler Beschäftigung und außerlandwirtschaftlichen Einkommen. Doch eine Gruppe von fortwährend Armen und bezüglich Bildung Marginalisierten droht zunehmend abgehängt zu werden.

Keywords: Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, education, development, livelihoods, developing countries/population, educational geography

1 Introduction

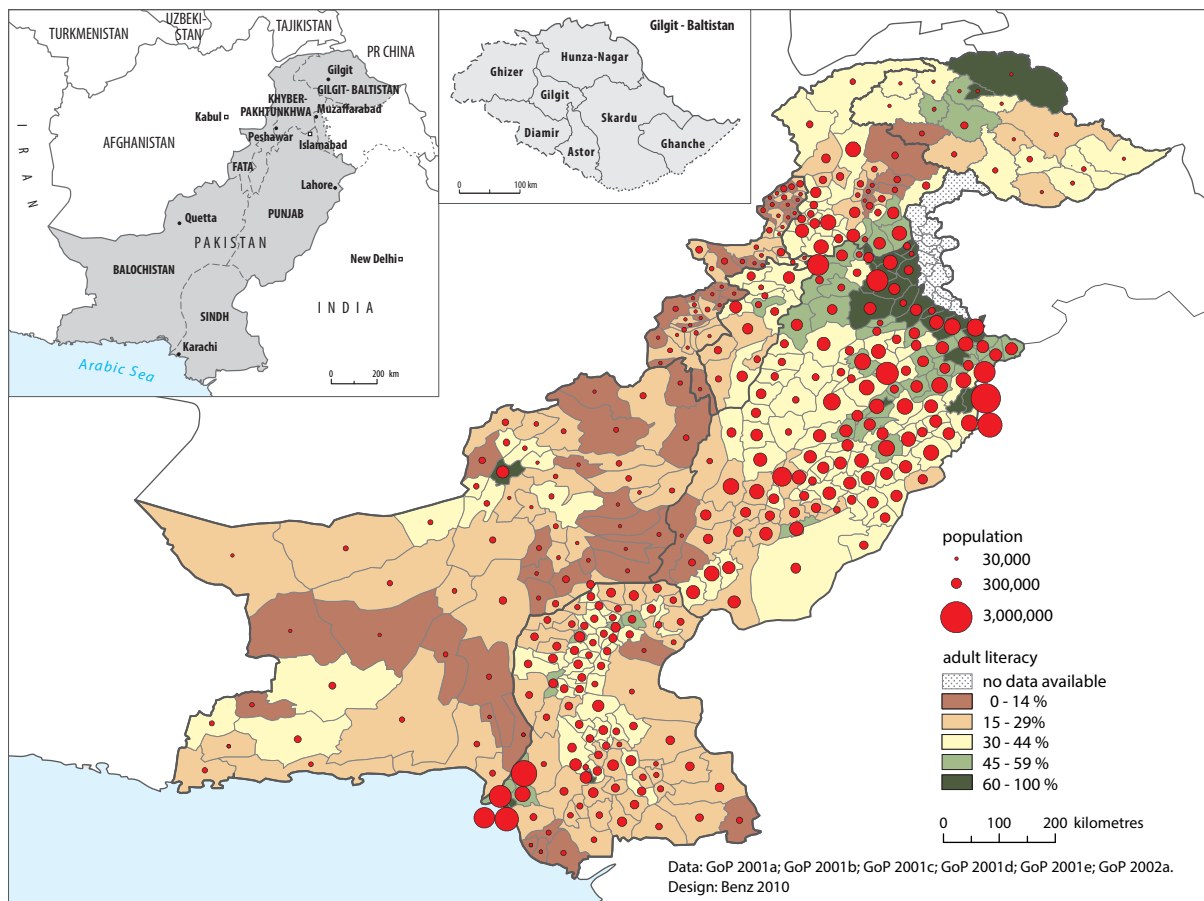
Formal education in schools, colleges and universities is considered one of the key factors and a precondition for facilitating social and economic development in the countries of the Global South (CHABBOTT and RAMIREZ 2000; McGRATH 2010; PATRINOS and PSACHAROPOULOS 2011; UL HAQ and HAQ 1998; WORLD BANK 1998). The fight against illiteracy, the achievement of universal primary education, the improvement of education quality and the expansion of higher

educational institutions are top priorities on the international and national development agendas. In the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and in the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, the world community in the year 2000 has set the objective of achieving universal primary education by the year 2015. But few years before reaching the end of this period, there are still 67 million children worldwide out of school, and 796 million adults are lacking basic literacy skills (UNESCO 2011, 5–7). After declining numbers of out-of-school children in

the first years of the MDG period, they are now expected to be on the rise again (UNESCO 2011, 42). Especially in rural peripheral areas progress in education has been very slow. More than 80% of all out-of-school children and the majority of the world's illiterates live in rural areas (UNESCO 2009, 60). A tremendous educational gap between rural and urban areas persists in most of the countries of the Global South. For example, in Pakistan the urban literacy rates and the secondary school enrolment rates are more than double as high as in the rural average (GoP 2008a, 58; UNESCO 2010, 100). Gender disparities in education are significantly higher in Pakistan's rural areas (LLOYD et al. 2007, 105). The progress in educational expansion has mostly happened in the urban centres and agglomerations, while the rural areas are threatened to be left behind. Pathways and recipes to overcome the growing educational divide are in high demand.

2 Pathways to rural education expansion

Pakistan has the second-largest number of out-of-school children worldwide (7.3 million) (UNESCO 2011, 41) and is home to the second-largest population of people lacking basic literacy skills (50 million) (UNESCO 2012). Regional education disparities are particularly pronounced within the country, with education levels by trend declining from urban to rural areas, from richer to poorer regions, from population centres to sparsely populated regions, and from the centre to the periphery (see Fig. 1). But in the northern high-mountain periphery of Pakistan, this generally prevailing pattern is suspended and even reversed. Despite of being a remote, rural, sparsely populated and comparatively poor high mountain periphery, such education levels prevail in parts of the Gilgit-Baltistan region which equal those of the urban and economic centres in Pakistan (see Tab. 1). An inquiry in the particularity of educational expansion in this region promises to provide helpful insights and ideas for developing viable pathways to rural educational



Tab.1: Comparison of education indicators for Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan

primary net enrolment rate ^a	1998			2005–06		
	total	male	female	total	male	female
Pakistan	42% ^b	47% ^b	37% ^b	66% ^c	73% ^c	59% ^c
Punjab	44% ^b	47% ^b	40% ^b	68% ^c	70% ^c	66% ^c
Sindh	41% ^b	47% ^b	35% ^b	67% ^c	77% ^c	57% ^c
Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa	39% ^b	47% ^b	30% ^b	66% ^c	81% ^c	51% ^c
Baluchistan	36% ^b	44% ^b	28% ^b	40% ^c	47% ^c	33% ^c
Azad Jammu and Kashmir	45% ^c	46% ^c	44% ^c	57% ^c	58% ^c	56% ^c
Gilgit-Baltistan	51% ^d	58% ^d	43% ^d	83% ^c	100% ^c	66% ^c
Gilgit District*	68% ^d	73% ^d	62% ^d	^a age 5-9, class 1-5		
Ghizer District	64% ^d	71% ^d	57% ^d	^b GoP 2006c; data given for FY 1998-99		
Skardu District	45% ^d	55% ^d	33% ^d	^c GoP 2008a:95, 99; data given for FY 2001-02/FY 2005-06 respectively		
Ghanche District	58% ^d	66% ^d	49% ^d	^d GoP 2001a; GoP 2001b; GoP 2001c; GoP 2001d; GoP 2001e		
Diamir District*	29% ^d	36% ^d	22% ^d	Data compilation and calculations: BENZ 2012		

* administrative district division as per 1998

expansion in other rural peripheries of Pakistan and other countries of the Global South.

In this article I will analyze the process of educational expansion in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and identify the key factors which made possible here what failed in many other rural peripheries. For this, in the first part of the article, the history of education in the region will be outlined and the heterogeneous development trajectories of different sub-regions of GB will be described, along with the respective major development interventions, education sector initiatives and other facilitating factors. In the second part of the article, the meaning and impacts of the educational expansion on the rural households' livelihoods will be analyzed based on the question if and how formal education can contribute to human development and improve well-being in the rural periphery.

3 Methods

The data presented in this article have been gained during several periods of extensive field research in Gilgit-Baltistan since 2006. Four detailed village case studies in selected parts of Gilgit-Baltistan¹⁾

¹⁾ The selected case study villages reflect the denominational and ethno-linguistic heterogeneity of the region. The Shina-speaking population of the village Singal in Ghizer

have been conducted, applying a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. These included standardized household surveys; semi-structured interviews with household members; biographical interviews, oral history interviews and open narrative interviews with household members, students, principals, teachers, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), village elders and other local experts. School surveys, document analysis and analysis of statistical data from the Gilgit-Baltistan Education Department and other government and non-government agencies complemented the data collection.

4 The beginnings of formal education in Gilgit-Baltistan

The high education levels, which today characterize large sections of Gilgit-Baltistan, are very recent achievements and the outcome of a rapid and

District and the Wakhi-speaking population of the village Passu in Hunza-Nagar District are homogeneously Ismailis. The village of Shigar in Baltistan District has a Balti-speaking Twelver Shiite majority population. The village of Eidgah in Astor District has Shina-speaking mixed Sunni and Twelver Shiite population. Data have been collected in Singal in 2006 and 2007, in Shigar in 2007 and 2008, in Eidgah in 2008 and in Passu in 2011.

largely successful educational expansion. Only three generations back, the overwhelming majority of the population was illiterate and never had the chance to attend a school. The first modern formal school in the area of present Gilgit-Baltistan was established in 1892 in Gilgit under the British colonial administration. It offered primary education exclusively for the sons of the feudal ruling elites of the various mountain principalities of the region, securing their loyalty in the British system of indirect rule (DAD 2009, 78; KREUTZMANN 1989, 162; MEHR DAD 1995, 188; SINGH 1917, 16). Before that, the local elites received their education privately from religious scholars (*sheikh* and *khalifa*), focussing on instruction in religious doctrine and literacy in Arabic and Persian (BEG 2009, 57; NAZAR 2009, 23–24). For their further studies, some sons of the elite families left the region and got admission in formal education institutions in Kashmir and the British-Indian plains (CHOHAN 1983, 201; DAD 2009, 77; HASAN 2009, 6). Literacy rates have been less than two percent in the Jammu and Kashmir Region in 1901, of which Gilgit-Baltistan was part of (LAWRENCE 1908, 79). Even after the establishment of additional primary and middle schools in the area during the first decades of the 20th century²⁾, education remained severely restricted, since access to these schools was still limited to male members of the local ruling families and gentry, and all other people were deprived of any educational opportunities (DAD 2009, 78; FELMY 2006, 373; KREUTZMANN 1989, 162; 1996, 308).

The first major initiative for an expansion of formal education in Gilgit-Baltistan and for making education accessible for the ‘common people’ was launched in the late 1940s, when Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili community, established an initial number of 46 boys’ primary schools within only a few years after 1946. By these so-called Diamond Jubilee (DJ) Schools³⁾ the number of available

schools in the Ismaili settlement areas of Hunza, Gilgit and Ghizer⁴⁾ more than doubled. In Hunza alone, the number of schools increased from one primary school to seventeen primary schools and one middle school in 1946/47 (AKESP 2005; IQBAL 2009; NAZAR 2009, 2, 93). Guidance of Aga Khan III obliged the local rulers in the Ismaili settlement areas, themselves followers of the Ismailia and subject, therefore, to the religious guidance, to bring an end to the restrictive permission system which controlled and limited access to formal education, and to allow school attendance for all (male) children, irrespective of their class and family background. These two factors, the local availability of schools and the abolition of access restrictions to education, together mark the beginning of the male educational expansion in the Ismaili settlement areas of Gilgit-Baltistan (see Fig. 2). Special hostel arrangements in Gilgit and scholarships for Ismailis enabled students from Hunza and Ghizer to continue their education in Gilgit or in Karachi (KREUTZMANN 1996, 308; SÖKEFELD 1997, 128). In addition, the Aga Khan III repeatedly called his followers in various *farman* (religious messages) to educate their children and to enrol them in schools. For example, in a message broadcasted via All India Radio in 1940, the Aga Khan III especially appealed to his followers in Gilgit-Baltistan, “try to educate your children, make efforts to learn European languages and English” (Aga Khan III, cited in: NAZAR 2009, 92).

5 Unequal trajectories of educational expansion in Gilgit-Baltistan

With the end of the British *raj* in 1947, the Gilgit-Baltistan Region came under Pakistani control, but received a special status within the political setup of the country due to it being a part of the disputed Kashmir region. Because of its high geo-strategic importance, the Pakistani state started to invest heavily in the physical infrastructure

²⁾ In 1911, one middle school and eight primary schools existed in the Gilgit Agency (CHOHAN 1983, 201). According to Census Data for 1941, their number rose to one boys’ high school, four boys’ middle schools, 54 boys’ primary schools and one girls’ primary school (DANI 1991, 412).

³⁾ The name refers to the 60th Imamate anniversary of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III. In the context of the anniversary celebrations in March 1946 the Aga Khan was gifted his personal weight in the form of diamonds from his followers from the Indian subcontinent and from Africa. From these donations the so-called Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust was created, enriched by additional means, and devoted to charitable projects for the Ismaili communities

in the fields of education and health (FELMY 1996, 74).

⁴⁾ Ismailis constitute the majority population in the Hunza section of Hunza-Nagar District and in the Ghizer District. The Nagar section of Hunza-Nagar District has a Twelver Shiite majority. In the Gilgit District Ismailis, Sunnis and Shiites approximately form each one third of the population. In the Districts of Astor and Diamir the majority population is Sunni, while in the Districts Skardu and Ghanche the Twelver Shiites and followers of the Nurbakhshia form the majority (KREUTZMANN 1995b).

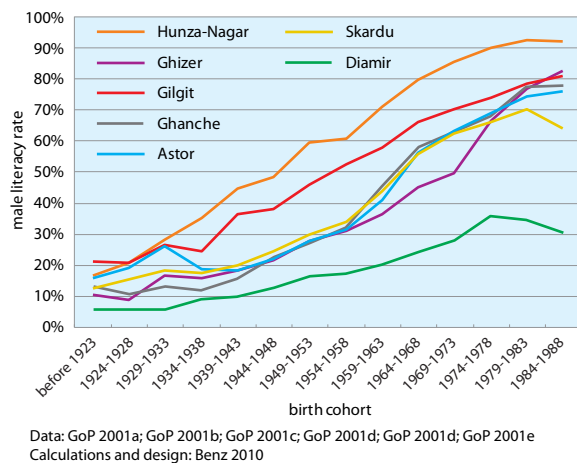


Fig. 2: Male literacy rate in Gilgit-Baltistan by district and birth cohort

in the former Gilgit Agency and Baltistan. Large-scale road construction programmes improved traffic connectivity to many far-flung valleys, which enhanced market access, made travels more easy and gave a boost to the socio-economic development of the region (DITTMANN 2003; DITTMANN and EHLERS 2003, 2004; KREUTZMANN 1991, 1995a, 2004). The Pakistani state had taken over responsibility for the existing schools in Gilgit-Baltistan from the British and the Dogras (the former Hindu rulers of Kashmir) and started to invest in the establishment of new schools throughout the region. In the first decade after independence, and again in the subsequent decade, the number of government schools in Gilgit-Baltistan more than doubled (GoP 2006a). Almost exclusively boys' schools were established in the 1940s and 1950s in both, the Aga Khan school programme and the government's education initiatives, and girls' education was widely neglected.

It was only after the visit of Shah Karim al-Hussaini, Aga Khan IV to the Hunza Valley in October 1960 that female education started to gain more attention. After observing and discussing the education situation in Hunza in the course of his visit, the Aga Khan initiated a reorientation of the DJ schools and made girls' education their new focus. Some former boys' DJ schools were turned into co-educative institutions and new DJ schools for girls were established. The new emphasis of the DJ schools on girls' education marks the take-off point for female educational expansion in Gilgit-Baltistan, and these schools continue to play an important role for girls' education in the Ismaili settlement regions of Gilgit-Baltistan until the present

day⁵). Equally important as the establishment of girls' schools were the various *farman* of the Aga Khan III and IV, in which they emphasized particularly the high importance of female education and called their followers to send all their children, and even preferably their daughters, to schools.⁶ Comparable impulses for female education were lacking in the other parts of the region, and the government's efforts for educational expansion continued to give preference for male education. This situation is reflected in an earlier onset and a higher pace of the rise in female literacy levels in the Ismaili settlement areas compared to the rest of the region (see Fig. 3).

Ismailis consider the sayings of their living Imam, the Aga Khan, mandatory for all his followers. The Aga Khan IV intensified after his inauguration in 1957 the policy of his predecessor aiming at the modernization and at social and economic development of the community of his followers in Gilgit-Baltistan, an effort which has been given an institutionalized framing by establishing the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and its various sector organizations. Numerous *farman* of the Aga Khan IV and his predecessor, in which they appealed to their followers to actively participate in the modernization programmes, have supported these development efforts (KREUTZMANN 1996, 307). In addition, the various AKDN programmes provided important employment opportunities in the region for those who had acquired higher education.

In 1972/74, under the rule of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the feudal rule in the remaining mountain principalities of the region was eventually ended and the *mir* and *raja* disempowered. The government intensified its education sector investments and school expansion programmes in the newly established Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA), leading to an accelerated increase in the number of (predominantly boys') government schools (see Fig. 4). With this, access to education also improved in many areas of Gilgit-Baltistan out-

⁵ For example, in the Ghizer District 69% of all female students (class 1 to 12) are enrolled in DJ schools (GoP 2006a, author's calculations).

⁶ For example, one often cited *farman* of Aga Khan III reads, "If a man has two children, one a boy and the other a girl, and if he could only afford to give education to one, I would say that he must give preference to the girl. The boy can go and labour but the girl cannot. Even in the upliftment of the country the education of girls is more important than that of boys" (ISMAILIA ASSOCIATION OF PAKISTAN 1969, 213, cited in: HARLECH-JONES et al. 2003, 171).

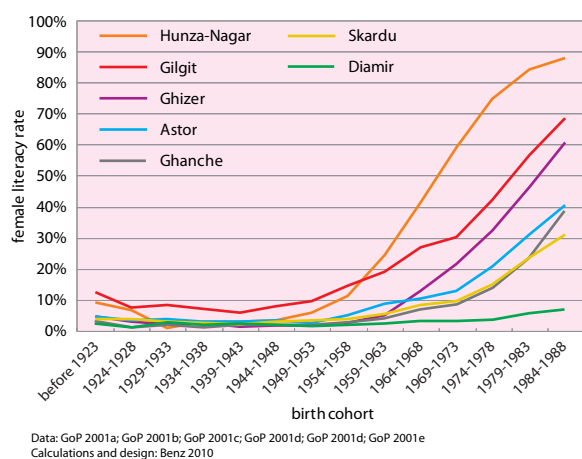


Fig. 3: Female literacy rate in Gilgit-Baltistan by district and birth cohort

side the Ismaili settlement areas, which led to rising male literacy rates in the birth cohorts since the mid-1960s (see Fig. 3). Female literacy rates, though, remained low outside the Ismaili areas, until the birth cohorts of the early 1980s.

Besides the regionally unequal availability of girls' schools, the gender differences in education are also shaped by demand side factors. Formal education gained growing importance in the context of adaptations of rural livelihood systems to new and dynamically changing framework conditions. Continuous population growth under the condition of severely limited arable irrigation land resources in most settlements made imports of food supplies necessary, which have to be bought from the market. Monetization of the exchange relations replaced the formerly common barter economy, and cash income generation became a necessity for almost all households. Among the earliest opportunities for off-farm income generation was service in the army, initially in the Gilgit Scouts under British colonial rule, and later in different sections of the Pakistani Army, especially in the Northern Light Infantry (STÖBER 2001, 184–190). After the independence of Pakistan, and especially since the late-1970s, when various governmental and non-governmental development programmes were launched in the region, the number and spectrum of off-farm income opportunities increased, e.g., in the public administration, in infrastructure projects, in the education and health sector, in private sector enterprises and in different NGOs. For the overwhelming majority of these jobs, formal education was a key requirement. In the early years of the male educational expansion, educational decisions were strongly influenced by the high level of uncertainty with respect to the actual

benefits and practical usefulness of schooling in the context of livelihoods mainly based on subsistence agriculture (NAZAR 2004, 31). With the passage of time, these doubts were replaced by the strong conviction of the necessity of formal education for men to fulfil their expected role as the breadwinner of the family in the context of changed livelihood systems under the conditions of a market- and cash-economy.

The decisions about female education equally have been and still are strongly guided by gender role-specific considerations. In a situation where formal pension schemes still are the exception, and support and care for the parents in their old age is provided exclusively by their sons, the parents will only enjoy returns on the educational investments in their sons (cf. for other parts of Pakistan: ASLAM and KINGDON 2008). In the prevailing patrilineal and patrilocal family systems, the daughters leave the parental household and join their in-laws families, so that all investments in the education of daughters are considered “lost” for the parental household (FELMY 1993, 200). In addition, female professional employment has formerly not been socially accepted in Gilgit-Baltistan and women were expected to fulfil their role as housewife and mother, for which formal education was considered unnecessary (ASHRAF 2007; BEG 2009; SALES 1999). Today, in most Sunni and Shiite areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, women's employment is accepted in those professions where female professionals are urgently needed, namely in the health and education sectors. Especially within the Ismaili community a broader variety of employment sectors are open to women and have found social acceptance. Female education in the Ismaili community was initially pursued mostly in order to comply with the religious imperative expressed in the Aga Khan's *farman* and sometimes despite of personal objections (BEG 2009, 57; STÖBER 2001, 230). But it experienced an additional boost when the first women professionals proofed to be able to substantially contribute

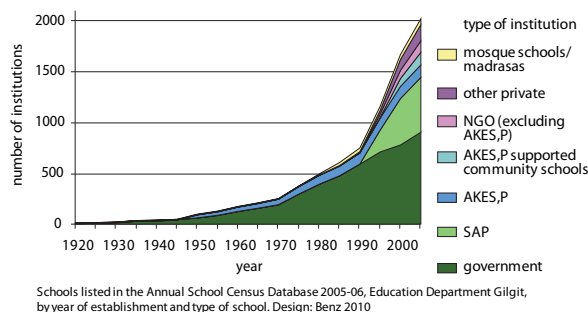


Fig. 4: The expansion of formal education institutions in Gilgit-Baltistan 1920–2005

to the household's income due to their education and professional job (FELMY 1993; KREUTZMANN 1996).

6 Recent trends and education sector developments

Until the late 1980s, female enrolment was very low in those districts with a majority Sunni or Twelver Shiite population, i.e. in the Astor-, Diamir, Skardu- and Ghanche Districts. In these districts the literacy rate of women born in the early 1980s is below 30%, while women of the same age from the Ismaili Hunza District show literacy rates of 85% (see Fig. 3). In the non-Ismaili areas all three decisive factors which enabled the successful educational expansion among Ismaili women have been lacking: a sufficient number of girls' schools, the pro-female religious education imperative as expressed in the *farman* of the Aga Khan, and the reconsideration of the value and utility of female's formal education in the context of professional employment and income generation.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, different large-scale education sector programmes aimed at improving the education opportunities especially for girls from poorer families throughout the region. The education sector component of the Social Action Programme (SAP), financed by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other international donors, established about 540 co-educational primary schools in the region between 1993 and 2003 (GoP 2006a; HARLECH-JONES et al. 2005, 559). Though impressive in number, these schools were not able to provide quality education, suffered from organizational, financial and staff-related shortcomings and largely failed to achieve their objectives (BRITISH COUNCIL and AKU-IED 1999; SHAFI 2011). Another large-scale programme, the Northern Pakistan Education Programme (NPEP, 1997–2008) aimed at quality improvements of the education provision in the region. Financed by the European Commission and implemented by the Aga Khan Education Service, Pakistan (AKES,P), the programme established two so-called “Professional Development Centres” for the provision of teacher training courses and initiated various measures and activities aiming at an improvement of the quality of teaching (GoP 2008b, 8). In addition, it systematically assisted, in a highly participatory approach, more than 120 village communities to establish and run so-called “community-based schools” from the primary to the inter-college level (AKF 2007).

As a result of these sector programmes (SAP, NPEP) and thanks to substantial support from international development agencies, the number of schools in Gilgit-Baltistan more than doubled during the programme periods (see Fig. 4), and especially girls' enrolment considerably increased from a Gross Enrolment Ratio of 38% in 1997 to 67% in 2005 (AKF 2007, 1). Within only six years, between 1996/97 and 2002/03, the number of girls in Gilgit-Baltistan attending a school more than doubled (SHAFI 2011, 247). Though, severe quality problems in the region's governmental, SAP and community schools remained an issue and many parents were unsatisfied with the available choice of schools. They desired high-quality and ‘modern’, English-medium education for their children to prepare them for university studies and enhance their opportunities at the employment market (HARLECH-JONES et al. 2003). A wave of establishments of private schools was witnessed in the region since the early 1990s, which marks the beginning of a lasting boom of private sector schools and colleges which continues till the present day (ANDRABI et al. 2002; ANDRABI et al. 2008; HARLECH-JONES et al. 2005). Private school initiatives aimed at filling the large gaps in education supply left by the state, e.g. the insufficient number of girls' schools and lacking local institutions at high school or intercollege level. They also intended to provide a higher quality education alternative to the often poor quality of teaching in the government school sector, which suffers from many shortcomings (BENZ 2012). While a large proportion of these private schools are run by school chains or by educational entrepreneurs for profit, some of the earliest private schools in the region were established through community self-help initiatives. For example, in Hunza over a dozen private English-medium schools were established by different village communities around 1990 (FELMY 2006, 380; HÄMMERLE 1999, 125; KREUTZMANN 1996, 314), and have later been assisted by AKES,P through quality management and English language enhancement programmes (AKESP 1997; RAHMAN 2004, 36).

One of the most attractive features of the new private schools was the English medium teaching, for which the parents were ready to pay obligatory school fees. The existing schools with Urdu medium teaching felt the pressure to adapt to the changing patterns of parents' demand, which resulted in the introduction of English subject teaching from class one in government schools in 1996 and in the introduction of full English medium teaching in more than hundred government schools since 2001

(GoP 2006b; HARLECH-JONES et al. 2003, 179). Also, AKES,P made the DJ schools switch to English medium teaching in 1997 and established a number of model schools (so-called Aga Khan Higher Secondary Schools, one of them exclusively for girls) at the intercollege level with high quality standards and English medium teaching.

After the turn of the millennium, the first university of Gilgit-Baltistan, the Karakorum International University (KIU) in Gilgit, was established in 2002, marking a preliminary culmination point of the expansion of post-secondary formal education in the region. KIU provides a range of Bachelor and Master courses to its about 2000 students in subjects relevant to the regional socio-economic development (KIU 2012).

Currently, the regional centres Gilgit and Skardu have developed into educational hubs, with high rates of establishments of new private English-medium schools and colleges, which attract students from all over the region. Educational migration to colleges and universities in the Pakistani lowlands, which already started to increase in the 1970s, is now a very widespread phenomenon and has largely contributed to the growing numbers of degree holders from Gilgit Baltistan.

7 Outcomes and impacts of the educational expansion

The trend of expansion of formal education is visible throughout Gilgit-Baltistan, but is characterized by very unequal development trajectories along the lines of region, timing and pace of developments, gender and socio-economic status, which have resulted in pronounced educational disparities.

Regional disparities exist with respect to general education levels (see Fig. 5) and with respect to gender equality in education (see Fig. 6). Besides the two regional centres Gilgit and Skardu, the Ismaili settlement areas of Hunza, Gojal, Gilgit and Punial show the highest literacy levels and particularly Hunza, Gojal and Punial the smallest gender disparities in education. In most of the Sunni, Shiite and Nurbakhshia settlement areas education levels in general and female education levels in particular are lower in comparison to the Ismaili areas. While, e.g., in Hunza the female gross enrolment rates even exceed the male rates from the primary to the inter-college levels, girls in the Diamir District make up only 12% of the primary students, and post-primary female enrolment is nearly inexistent there (GoP 2006a).

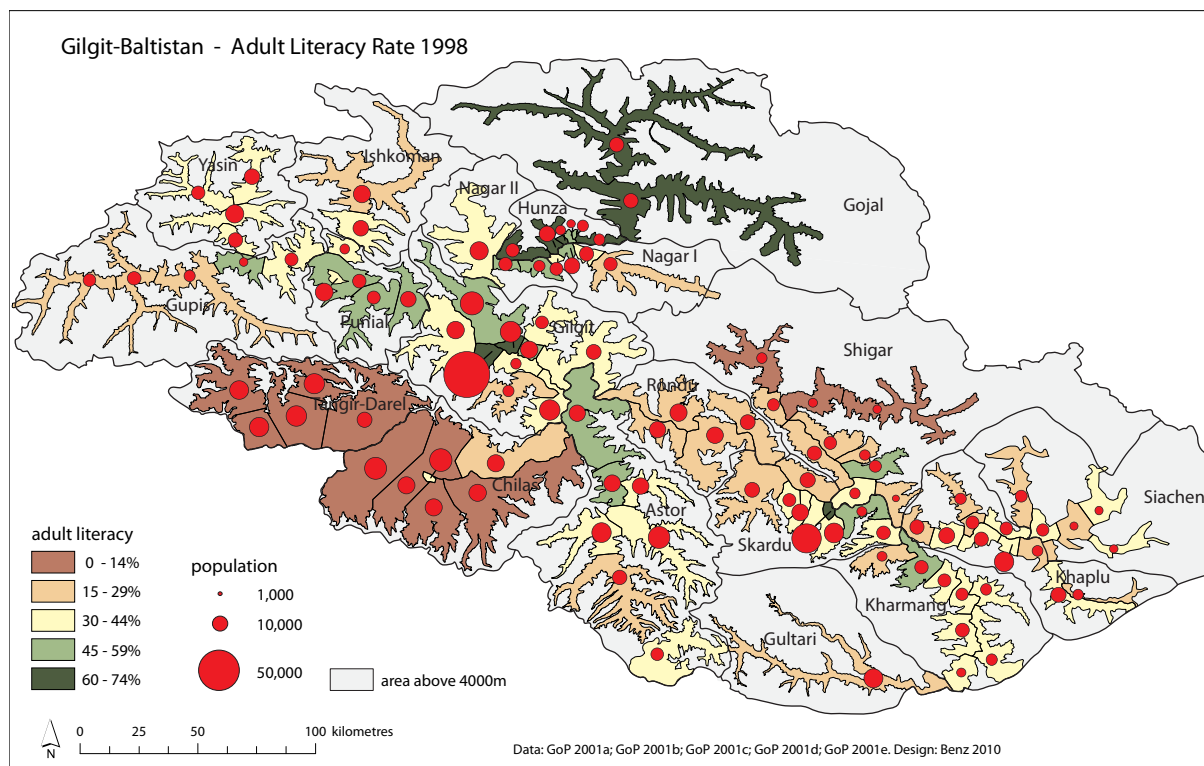


Fig. 5: Regional education disparities in Gilgit-Baltistan

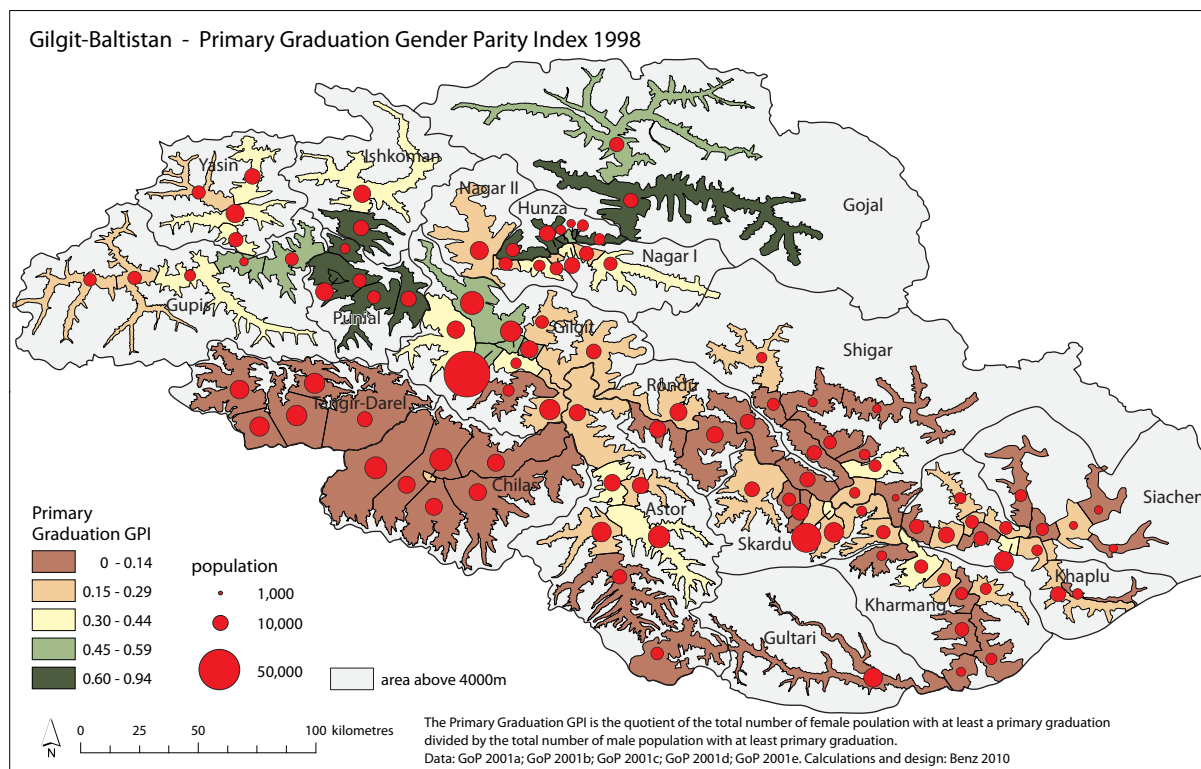


Fig. 6: Gender-related regional education disparities in Gilgit-Baltistan

The comparatively rapid educational expansion in the area has resulted in inter- and intra-generational educational disparities, which are reflected in unequal personal education levels within multi-generation households and in family genealogies. In many households a huge leap in education from illiteracy to high levels of education up to university degrees within only one to two generations can be seen (see Fig. 7). Case study data from the Ismaili village of Singal show that in the age group of 25–50 year-old about 60% of women and 78% of men have achieved a higher education level than their parents. The younger brothers and sisters of a family often have higher education levels compared to the older ones, and brothers have often higher education levels than their sisters. In extreme cases one brother may have a university degree while another brother and/or sister has never attended school (e.g. household 41, see Fig. 7). Education related gender disparities are reproduced by the widespread unequal treatment of sons and daughters in the family's education strategies. In most families boys are strongly preferred with respect to education in comparison to the girls of the family. Boys receive higher educational investments, are more likely to attend (supposedly higher-quality) private schools and private tuition, remain

longer in the education system, are more often provided with the opportunity to study in institutions of higher education in the cities, and they complete their education with higher degrees (see Tab. 2).

The dominant motive for pursuing education strategies are the expected positive effects on income and job opportunities, as stated by most of the parents in the case study villages. Empirical data from the case studies actually prove these expectations to hold true, at least by trend. A close relation between a person's education level and his or her employment prospects and income level could be empirically established. In the village of Eidgah, for example, the probability of being employed without formal education is 57% for men and 2% for women, which rises for university degree holders to 98% for men and about 100% for women respectively⁷⁾. Among those persons in remunerated employment the average monthly income is about 6,950 Pakistani Rupees (Rs) for men and 3,500 Rs for women without formal education. For university degree holder the average income rises to 21,900 Rs for men and 16,500 Rs for women. Though, the

⁷⁾ The sample consists of 398 people (aged 15 to 60 years) from 25 Sunni and 25 Shiite families of Eidgah.

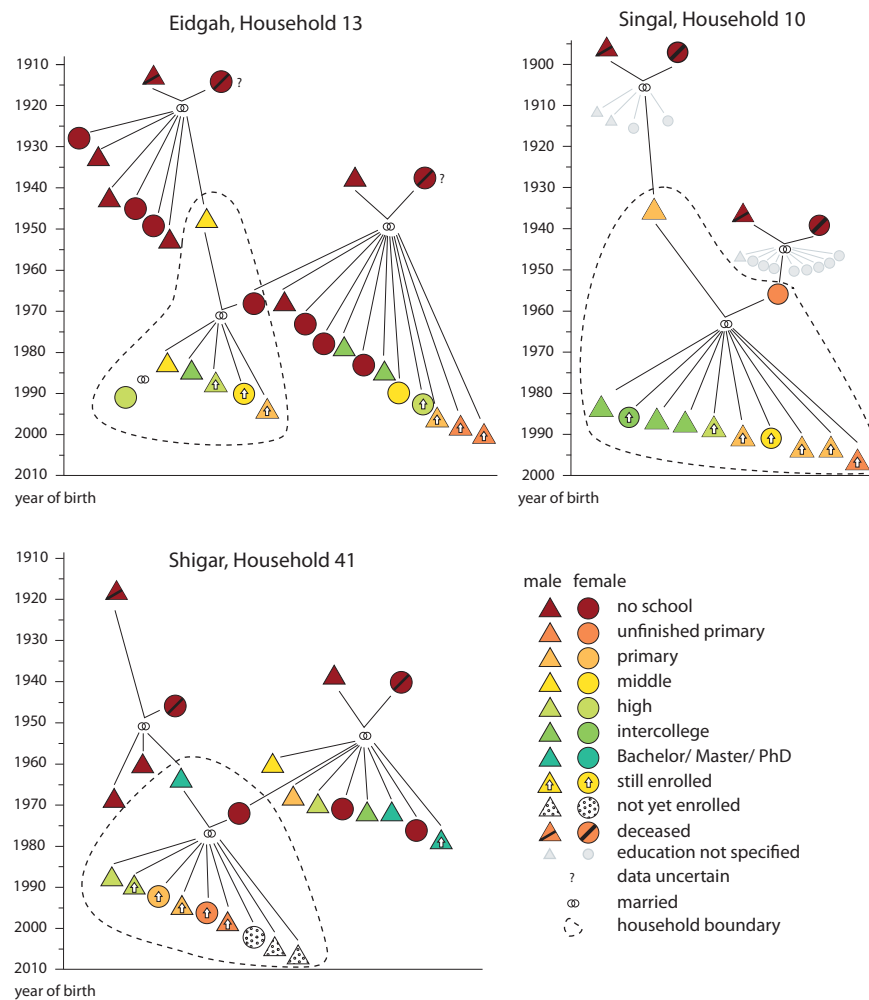


Fig. 7: Unequal education structures within family genealogies reflect the process of educational expansion

income variation is very high, and higher education is no guarantee for good professional positions and high income.

Due to the general positive employment and income effects, many households in Gilgit-Baltistan strongly benefitted from the outcomes of their education strategies. Particularly those households which opted for school enrolment in the early years of the educational expansion could realize upward social mobility and an improved living standard, since qualified experts were scarce in the region and highly demanded in various professional fields. Later on, job competition among growing numbers of highly educated candidates increased considerably, leading to a relative devaluation of educational degrees in the job market and rising unemployment levels. Those families, who were among the educational pioneers and through this got access to off-farm income in well-paid positions, today make use

of their comparative advantage and heavily invest in their children's education, enrol them in costly private schools in the region or in "down-country" Pakistan, and by this secure their advanced social position for the next generation. Poorer families, who already missed to participate in the first round of educational expansion, are unable to bear the high sums demanded by private schools and often rely on the low quality but free-of-cost government schools (BENZ et al. 2008). Even though the educational expansion had started under fairly equal social conditions among the people after the abolition of the feudal system in the 1970s (WOOD and MALIK 2006, 57–58), it has produced marked educational and socio-economic disparities over the last four decades. Empirical data from the case studies provide strong hints on mechanisms of social reproduction through education, as described in sociological theories of status reproduction (BOURDIEU and PASSERON

Tab. 2: Unequal educational opportunities for boys and girls in Eidgah, Astor District

indicator	boys	girls
secondary school participation rate	73%	63%
per-student monthly education expenses (class 6-12)	1200 Rs	310 Rs
proportion of students attending private schools (class 6-12)	29%	7%
average years of schooling (age group 20-30 years)	10.5	7.7
proportion of students studying outside Astor District (intercollege level and higher)	43%	29%
proportion of degree holders (bachelor and higher) in age group 25-35 years	41%	16%

1977; BOWLES and GINTIS 1976; COLLINS 1979, 2000). Higher educated parents and economically better-off households tend to invest more money in their children's education and can afford private English-medium schools and private tutoring. They provide their children with better opportunities for higher studies in expensive private colleges and universities in the cities and abroad. All this will enhance their future income and employment opportunities. Based on this mechanism, the social status of their parents is reproduced and transmitted to the next generation. This phenomenon has been termed the "boomerang effect" of the educational expansion (BECKER 2003, 12), where pupils of parents, who themselves have benefitted from the educational expansion, are more likely to enter higher education levels than children of parents with lower educational credentials. Fears are growing in the region that in the future the educational and socio-economic disparities could further increase and evolve into a social divide, when the gap between the educational "haves" and "have-nots" further develops (HASAN 2009, 17; HERBERS 1998, 106; WOOD and MALIK 2006, 45, 50).

8 Discussion and conclusion

In parts of Gilgit-Baltistan a very successful educational expansion could be realized while many other regions of the rural periphery in Pakistan show only little progress in education. The analysis of the unequal historical trajectories of the education process in different areas and communities of Gilgit-Baltistan underlines the singularity of each trajectory and its context settings, which points to the limits of repeatability and transferability of successful individual development paths. Nevertheless, some key factors can be carved out from this analysis, which played a decisive role in making the educational expansion a success in parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, and from which inspiration and ideas for other areas and contexts can be drawn.

First, the quantitative part of the education expansion, i.e., the establishment of hundreds of new schools and the engagement of thousands of additional teachers, could only be realized thanks to external and/or non-state initiatives and large-scale external financial support, be it in form of AKES, P's DJ school programme, be it the large-scale sector programmes of the 1990s/2000s with funding from international donors, or be it the numerous community-based and private sector school establishments. The permanently underfinanced governmental education sector alone would not have been able to launch such an educational expansion. Sufficient, durable and reliable funding is a prerequisite for the success of every school. Second, the quality aspect of education provision has played a vital role in the expansion process, since only meaningful and utilizable contents imparted by motivated and skilled teachers through the application of adequate teaching methods will find parents' and students' acceptance and reap benefits in the 'real life' context after school. Therefore, quality improvement measures like enhanced teacher education, recurrent trainings for teachers and principals, school management trainings, curriculum and textbook revisions, and improved evaluation and monitoring mechanisms have been some of the decisive factors in Gilgit-Baltistan. Third, the creation of adequate channels and means for community participation in school management and education-related affairs has increased acceptance of new schools and constitutes an efficient means for monitoring of the quality of school management and teaching. And fourth, scholarship schemes have paved the way for many students, particularly women, to higher education.

A highly important but most probably not transferable success factor for the educational expansion with respect to the Ismaili community, the educational front-runner of the region, is the modernization-oriented guidance by their religious leader, the Aga Khan. His *farman* made education come close to a religious duty for his followers and created a cer-

tain “educational spirit” or affinity to education in the Ismaili community. Even though today economic considerations are at least equally convincing reasons for getting education, the *farman* played a pivotal role in the early years of the educational expansion, particularly with respect to female education. Also, the guidance of the Aga Khan had a far reaching impact on women empowerment and changing gender roles, which enhanced the opportunities for female professional employment.

The educational expansion in Gilgit-Baltistan has not been a homogeneous and linear process but is characterized by variegated ruptures, inequalities and disparities along regional, denominational, socio-economic, inter- and intra-generational as well as gendered lines. After more than six decades of educational expansion, parts of the region have entered a certain state of saturation, where credentials abound and their value in the job market decreases due to fierce competition among highly qualified candidates for a limited number of positions. After a phase of a rather liquidized and permeable social stratification in the early years of the educational expansion, the window of opportunity for social advancement seems to be closing again. A marginalized group of the “continuing poor” (WOOD and MALIK 2006, 58), which could not benefit from the opportunities of economic and educational change in the region is threatened to be left behind, while the economic and educational winners of the last decades pave the way for further social advancement by high educational investments in their children. It seems that the opportunities of education disproportionately can be used by the better educated and wealthier households, while the constraints predominantly affect the less educated and poorer households. Therefore, targeted education sector interventions are necessary to particularly empower the households of the continuing economically and educationally marginalized, to improve their living conditions and to provide equal access to quality education and opportunities for catching-up by social advancement.

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