

Pathways to Development

Equitable and Sustainable Growth in Pakistan

Conference Note

Pathways to Development is a multidisciplinary conference that brings together empirical and historical research by economists, political scientists, sociologists, legal and constitutional scholars, and law and policy reform experts, within and outside Pakistan, to document and describe the scale of challenges facing Pakistan and to organise discourse about ways in which these can be mitigated.

At 75 years, Pakistan faces persistent economic, political and development challenges. The country has witnessed periods of high economic growth, which have failed to translate into significant progress vis-a-vis key development indicators. The macroeconomic foundations of the economy remain weak: Pakistan has been slow to adequately expand exports while remaining heavily import dependent in consumption and (capital intensive) production. With the associated current account deficits and one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world, the debt burden has only grown. Growth has benefitted certain sectors at the expense of others, often bypassing the vulnerable and marginalised. Women, in particular, remain relegated to the role of secondary earners, entering and exiting the labour market with high frequency and failing to make substantial gains in securing access to decent, empowering work. While the country has made progress in reducing the number of people living in poverty, very large proportions of the population remain vulnerable to negative shocks that are increasingly linked to climate change. Investments in social development have been inadequate, particularly for children, and have not kept pace with population growth. Poor investments in the early years are linked with poor learning trajectories, high dropouts and low lifetime incomes. Poverty, gender and location intersect to exclude a large percentage of the population from basic services and worsen outcomes for the most marginalised, particularly girls and those with disabilities. These exclusions become more severe in the face of environmental disasters and economic shocks. The closing of civic spaces and deep political polarisation limit government and policy actors' ability to deal with these challenges.

Finding pathways for mitigating and overcoming challenges requires engagement with knowledge and evidence on what works (and does not work) in terms of economic and social strategies and policies for Pakistan's context. This conference brings together a growing corpus of historical and applied primary research from different disciplines to take stock of the country's trajectory and the reform strategies available to put it on track for development.

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The inaugural conference - to be held on **December 19th - 21st, 2022** at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) - focuses on **Equitable and Sustainable Growth in Pakistan**, with work presented on the following themes:

- ❖ Catalysing Sustainable Economic Growth
- ❖ Macro-economic Stability
- ❖ Fiscal Foundations for Sustainable Development
- ❖ Human Capital
- ❖ Climate Change
- ❖ Gender
- ❖ Energy for Development
- ❖ Politics, Governance and Accountability
- ❖ Political Economy of Service Delivery
- ❖ Law and Social Justice

The inaugural conference is a collaboration between the Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives (IDEAS), the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and the Institute of Development Studies at University of Sussex (IDS). While this year all presentations are by invitation, the conference will move to an open-call in the following years. The aspiration is for this conference to serve as a platform for inter-disciplinary exchange of knowledge and collaboration, and a space for developing discourse and dialogue on development.