

QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER



Shades of Tomorrow & Desert Cinema for Peace

A youth-led initiative in Tharparkar promoted climate resilience, interfaith harmony, and community engagement by bringing together young people from diverse backgrounds. Through a plantation drive of drought-resistant trees and a peace-focused film screening with dialogue sessions, the initiative fostered environmental awareness, encouraged respectful conversations, and strengthened collaboration within the local community.

Reporting Rights Violations and Faith-Based Persecution in Pakistan

A media training workshop in Peshawar brought together journalists and digital content creators to strengthen ethical and responsible reporting on rights violations, faith-based persecution, and conflict. Through expert-led discussions and practical exercises, participants learned to report sensitively without escalating tensions, identify misinformation, and understand the legal and social dimensions of such issues, while also addressing the evolving challenges of modern journalism.



Policy Paper

Pakistan's Brain Drain or Brain Gain?

Executive summary

Pakistan's migration story cannot be accurately understood through the simple binary of "brain drain" and "brain gain". The evidence instead points to a more complex reality in which Pakistan continues to send large numbers of workers abroad, particularly to the labour markets of the Gulf, while also experiencing increasing outward mobility among students and highly skilled professionals. This produces a mixed set of outcomes for the country. On the one hand, migration generates substantial economic benefits through remittances and through the wider connections of the diaspora. On the other hand, it can impose serious costs in sectors where skilled workers are already in short supply and cannot be easily replaced.

The central policy question, therefore, is not merely how many Pakistanis are leaving, but rather who is leaving, from which sectors, and whether Pakistan possesses the capacity to retain, replace, or later re-engage that talent. Current data indicate that highly skilled migrants still constitute a minority of total registered outflows; for this reason, claims of a universal elite exodus are often overstated. However, the increasing departure of skilled workers in critical sectors such as healthcare, together with the rise in student migration, points to genuine long-term risks to state capacity, service delivery, and the domestic return on educational investment.

The causes of outward migration are largely structural in nature. Rapid labour force growth, high youth unemployment, widespread informality, inflation, poor job quality, insecurity, and terrorism all intensify the pressure to leave. Migration networks, study pathways, and household strategies supported by remittances then make emigration easier, more accessible, and more socially normalised. In this context, migration is functioning less as the product of a strong domestic opportunity structure and more as part of Pakistan's wider model of economic survival.

Remittances constitute the strongest argument in favour of "brain gain", yet they should be treated as a conditional benefit rather than a full offset to the loss of human capital. They provide vital support to households and to the country's foreign exchange position, but they do not automatically produce productive investment, export growth, innovation, or return migration. If dependence on remittances is poorly managed, it may deepen structural reliance and delay necessary reform.

Policy should therefore avoid coercive attempts to prevent migration and should instead seek to reduce the pressures that make departure necessary in the first place. The priority ought to be to move from one-way emigration towards circular migration and genuine brain gain through the creation of better jobs at home, the upgrading of skills, the support of return and reintegration, the channelling of diaspora investment into productive sectors, and the strengthening of security and the rule of law. Success should be measured not only in terms of remittance volumes, but also by whether Pakistan improves domestic opportunity, retains key professionals, attracts returning expertise, and transforms migration from a mechanism of survival into a driver of long-term development.

Facts and current situation

The debate on “brain drain vs. brain gain” in Pakistan is best understood through two overlapping phenomena. The first is large-scale labour emigration, most of it directed towards the Gulf states. The second is the outward movement of students and skilled workers towards both Gulf and OECD destinations. This second category can represent either a long-term loss of human capital or, alternatively, a pathway towards “brain gain” if skills, professional networks, savings, and investment later flow back into Pakistan. Recent policy and academic reviews have rightly stressed that public debate in Pakistan often overgeneralises from large headline outflow numbers. The more important policy question is not merely how many people are leaving, but which categories of people are leaving, from which sectors they are departing, and whether Pakistan has a realistic capacity to retain, replace, and re-attract talent over time (Shah et al., 2024).

A necessary starting point is the size of the Pakistani diaspora itself. The UN International Migrant Stock 2024 dataset indicates that the international migrant stock “by origin” for Pakistan reached 6,915,057 in mid-2024. This underlines the fact that a very large share of Pakistan’s human capital, across multiple skill levels, now resides abroad (United Nations DESA Population Division, 2024).

When one turns to annual outward flows, the most visible official series is the government’s protectorate system for workers departing through registered overseas employment channels. The Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment reports that since 1971 more than 10 million emigrants have secured overseas employment through registration with the bureau. It also notes that the peak year was 2015, when 946,571 workers departed, and reports that 687,246 Pakistanis went abroad for employment in 2025 up to November (Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, 2025).

These numbers, however, should not be read as a complete measure of total emigration. Research on Pakistan-to-Gulf mobility has pointed out that the BEOE database is confined to those who emigrate on work permits through the protectorate system. Those leaving on student visas or immigrant visas, those moving onwards from third countries, and those who initially enter on visit visas and subsequently convert to work arrangements may not be captured in these figures. Therefore, BEOE data is valuable and informative, but it remains incomplete when used to measure the full scope of Pakistan’s brain drain (Shah and Qazi, 2025).

The concentration of destinations is also striking. Pakistan’s official Economic Survey reports that in 2023 the largest shares of registered overseas workers went to Saudi Arabia at 49.5 per cent, the United Arab Emirates at 26.7 per cent, Oman at 7.0 per cent, and Qatar at 6.4 per cent. This shows that Pakistani emigration remains heavily concentrated in a relatively small number of labour-importing Gulf states (Ministry of Finance, 2024).

For the specific question of brain drain, however, skill composition matters far more than aggregate outflow numbers. The same official survey reports that the number of highly skilled registered workers increased from 20,865 in 2022 to 45,687 in 2023. By contrast, the number of skilled workers decreased from 347,733 in 2022 to 314,932 in 2023, while unskilled categories increased in 2023. If these figures are considered alongside total registered labour outflows of about 862,625 in 2023, the picture that emerges is that high-skill outward movement is indeed rising but still constitutes a minority share of total registered migration. Thus, while the increase in highly skilled migration is worrying from a state-capacity perspective, Pakistan’s overall migration profile remains dominated by lower- and middle-skill labour export rather than an absolute exodus of elite professionals alone (Ministry of Finance, 2024; Shah et al., 2024).

Skilled outward mobility is also evident through educational routes. In the year ending December 2025, the UK Home Office reported that Pakistan was the third most common nationality granted sponsored study visas, with 30,781 study visas, or 8 per cent of the total, granted to main applicants. In the United States, the Open Doors series of the Institute of International Education reported 10,988 Pakistani students in U.S. higher education in 2023/24, rising further to 13,165 in 2024/25. This indicates that student migration is becoming an increasingly important component of Pakistan's human-capital outflow, especially among younger and more educated segments of the population (Home Office, 2026; Institute of International Education, 2024).

The strongest argument for the “brain gain” side of the debate is usually made through remittances. Yet remittances should be understood as a conditional gain rather than an automatic compensation for the losses associated with emigration. The State Bank of Pakistan reports record workers' remittances of US\$38.3 billion in FY2025. It further reports that in FY2026 to date remittance inflows have remained very large, including US\$3.3 billion in February 2026 and a cumulative US\$26.5 billion during July–February FY2026. The State Bank itself also notes that such inflows finance a significant part of Pakistan's trade deficit. However, this same phenomenon may be read in another way. Atif Mian argues that remittances to Pakistan, now around US\$38 billion a year and roughly 10 per cent of GDP, stand at around twice the level one would normally expect for a country at Pakistan's income level. In his view, such unusually large inflows should not be seen simply as a success story; they also point towards weak domestic job creation and a migration-dependent survival model in which households increasingly rely on exit rather than opportunity at home (State Bank of Pakistan, 2025; State Bank of Pakistan, Monetary Policy Committee, 2026; Mian, 2025).

Historical commentary reinforces the need for caution in treating remittances as proof of national strength. Saud Ahmed Khan and Amena Urooj (2023) note that remittances rose sharply after 2008 and reached US\$31.28 billion in 2022, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE continuing as the largest sources, while inflows from the United Kingdom and the European Union also increased substantially. The same analysis further notes that temporary Gulf-based workers often remit more than migrants who have permanently settled abroad with their immediate families. This is an important distinction, because strong remittance inflows do not automatically imply long-term knowledge transfer, skill circulation, institutional development, or eventual return migration. Financial inflows can coexist with a continuing depletion of human capital and with limited spillovers into productive transformation at home (Khan and Urooj, 2023).

Domestic labour-market pressures provide much of the explanation for why so many young Pakistanis wish to leave. The Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2024–25 reports that Pakistan's labour force rose from 71.8 million in 2020–21 to 85.6 million in 2024–25, which means that roughly 3.5 million people are being added to the labour force every year. At the same time, the unemployment rate is reported at 6.9 per cent on the 13th ICLS comparison basis, while youth unemployment for those aged 15–24 stands at 12.8 per cent on the 19th ICLS basis. The survey also reports that employment in Pakistan remains overwhelmingly informal, with the informal employment share at 80.8 per cent under the 21st ICLS framing. Such conditions make outward migration appear rational to many households, especially where domestic labour markets offer insecurity, low productivity, and limited prospects for upward mobility (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025).

Macroeconomic conditions have improved compared to the peak inflation years, but the situation remains fragile from the point of view of ordinary households. Pakistan's official price statistics show year-on-year CPI inflation of around 6.8 per cent in urban areas and 7.3 per cent in rural areas in February 2026, demonstrating that cost-of-living pressures remain significant even during a period of macroeconomic stabilisation. The World Bank has similarly characterised FY2025 as a period of continued macroeconomic stabilisation while stressing that durable recovery depends on sustaining reforms that can generate growth and employment. This is crucial, because unless Pakistan is able to create broad-based, secure, and productive economic opportunities at home, outward migration will continue to appear to many of its young citizens not merely attractive, but necessary (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2026; World Bank, 2025).

Causes of brain drain: why Pakistan's youth are leaving?

Pakistan's youth out-migration is best understood through the interaction of push and pull factors. On the one hand, there is strong demand abroad for workers and students; on the other, there are persistent constraints within Pakistan that make departure an attractive option. Evidence drawn from Pakistan-specific labour market data, migration studies, and security indicators suggests that at least five structural drivers are contributing to this trend.

First, demographic growth combined with deficiencies in both the quantity and quality of employment has created intense competition for decent work. Pakistan's labour force continues to expand rapidly, adding millions of workers each year, which raises the burden on the economy to generate good jobs at a sufficient pace. Yet the labour market remains dominated by informality, with over four-fifths of employment falling within updated labour-statistical definitions of informal work (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025). As a result, many young workers, even when employed, face weak job security, few benefits, and limited prospects for upward mobility.

Second, economic volatility and inflation have acted as an important accelerator of emigration. Even in periods where headline stabilisation appears to occur, young households compare local-currency earnings with foreign-currency wage differentials and weigh these against future economic risks at home. Analytical work by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) explicitly links rising emigration pressure to limited domestic employment opportunities and the burden of inflation, presenting emigration as a rational response to constrained opportunities (Shah and Qazi, 2025). This is reinforced by broader analysis showing that worsening economic conditions have made outward migration increasingly attractive for many Pakistanis (Ahmed, 2024).

Third, insecurity, terrorism, and wider perceptions of everyday safety constitute a major push factor. These affect migration not only directly, through fear of violence, but also indirectly, by reducing investment, weakening local opportunities, and lowering expectations about quality of life. The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) reports that there were 699 terrorist attacks and at least 1,034 fatalities in 2025, describing this as a sharp surge in militant violence (Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2026). Similarly, the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) in the Global Terrorism Index 2026 reports that Pakistan was the country most affected by terrorism, recording 1,139 terrorism-related deaths and 1,045 incidents in 2025, and links this deterioration to cross-border dynamics and intensifying violence by major militant groups (Institute for Economics & Peace 2026). Beyond terrorism, broader concerns relating to law and order also matter. The World Justice Project (WJP) reports that Pakistan ranked 130th out of 143 countries in its 2025 index and performed particularly poorly on the measure of "Order and Security" (World Justice Project, 2025).

Survey-based public opinion also indicates growing concern over insecurity, including increased perceptions of street crime and theft during 2024 (Gallup Pakistan, 2025).

Fourth, migration networks and the relative accessibility of migration pathways reduce the difficulty of leaving. Pakistan's state apparatus has historically supported migration as a means of exporting labour, and official publications describe efforts to facilitate and digitise migration procedures. At the same time, the concentration of Pakistani migrants in a relatively small number of destination countries has created strong community networks abroad, which lower information barriers and reduce the cost of job searches for new migrants (Ministry of Finance, 2024). Study routes have further strengthened these pathways. Visa data from the United Kingdom show that Pakistani study visa issuance has remained substantial, while education mobility data from the United States indicate rising Pakistani enrolment. Such routes can, for some migrants, become channels for longer-term settlement (Home Office, 2026).

Fifth, remittance-backed migration networks make emigration self-reinforcing. When households observe relatives abroad stabilising family income, financing education, or protecting the household against inflation through remittances, migration comes to be seen not merely as an individual labour-market decision but as a broader household strategy for security and social mobility. In this way, remittances reduce the perceived risks associated with departure and help normalise emigration as a rational response to uncertainty at home (Khan and Urooj, 2023).

Analysis of the benefits and detriments of the brain drain

Pakistan's experience is not one that can be accurately described through a simple "either/or" framework. The available evidence points instead towards a more precise conclusion: Pakistan experiences a large outflow of labour which in turn generates very large foreign-exchange inflows, while at the same time certain sector-specific outflows of skilled labour can become seriously damaging where the domestic system is unable either to retain or to replace critical professionals. In this sense, migration presently functions as part of a national survival model. It is undoubtedly valuable in the short term, yet it cannot automatically be regarded as developmental in the long term unless the remittances generated through migration are converted into productive investment, stronger foreign-exchange reserves, greater export capacity, and circular return pathways (Mian, 2025).

On the side of the argument that "brain drain" in Pakistan is often overstated, multiple analyses arrive at broadly similar conclusions: highly skilled or qualified migrants continue to make up only a minority share of registered labour migration, generally remaining below 10 per cent, even though their absolute numbers are rising. Research focused on Gulf migration finds that the share of highly skilled or qualified migrants has historically remained below 10 per cent and stresses that the overwhelming majority of registered migrants still belong to the unskilled or semi-skilled categories (Shah and Qazi, 2025). The Pakistan Migration Report 2024 similarly argues that the recent rhetoric regarding an unprecedented or "massive brain drain" is not fully supported by the available official data. It reports that the share of highly skilled or qualified migrants rose to around 8 per cent in 2023, while at the same time warning that particular professions, especially nursing, do represent a genuine cause for concern (Shah et al., 2024; United Nations DESA Population Division, 2024).

The benefits, that is to say the “brain gain” channels, are real and are of considerable macroeconomic significance, although they operate at different levels. At the household level, remittances smooth consumption, support expenditure on food, education, and health, and function as a private shock absorber during periods of inflationary pressure or employment stress. At the macroeconomic level, remittances in FY2025 reached US\$38.3 billion, while monthly inflows in FY2026 averaged in the mid-US\$3 billion range. This made remittances one of Pakistan’s largest and most dependable sources of foreign exchange and helped finance a significant proportion of the trade deficit (State Bank of Pakistan, 2025; State Bank of Pakistan, Monetary Policy Committee, 2026).

At the same time, remittances are a cushion and not a substitute for structural transformation. It has been argued that while remittances can reduce balance-of-payments pressures during difficult periods, they cannot fully offset the trade deficit, nor can they solve Pakistan’s debt burden. Their developmental value therefore depends on what precisely they finance and whether they are channelled into productive uses rather than being absorbed merely into consumption (Khan and Urooj, 2023).

Mian takes this argument further by suggesting that very large remittance inflows can create a macroeconomic trap if they are badly managed. Where remittances increase domestic spending more rapidly than productive capacity grows, they can appreciate the real exchange rate, weaken export-oriented tradable sectors, and reinforce a pattern of low investment combined with high consumption, which are characteristic symptoms of Dutch disease. According to this view, remittances are not inherently harmful, but they can entrench dependence if the state allows them to sustain overvaluation, non-tradable rents, and delayed reform rather than using them for reserve accumulation and productive investment (Mian, 2025).

Migration may also generate “brain gain” through the acquisition of skills, exposure to higher-productivity systems, and the transfer of knowledge. However, these gains depend upon whether Pakistan is able to create credible return pathways and a domestic economic structure capable of using diaspora capital productively. Otherwise, the country may receive the consumption benefits of migration without securing its longer-term advantages in investment, technology transfer, or institutional learning (Shah and Qazi, 2025; Mian, 2025).

The harms become most serious where there is already a domestic shortage in a profession of high social value and where the system lacks the ability either to retain workers or to train replacements quickly. Nursing provides a particularly clear example. Research notes that Pakistan requires a No Objection Certificate for nurses and formally recognises existing shortages, yet the outflow of nurses has nevertheless risen sharply, from only a few hundred earlier in the decade to several thousand by 2023, depending on the series being used (Shah and Qazi, 2025). The Pakistan Business Council further highlights that nurse density in Pakistan is low, reported at 5.2 per 10,000 people, which is far below the critical World Health Organization threshold cited in the report. It also describes the health sector as doctor-centric, with an unfavourable nurse-to-doctor ratio, and notes the strong growth in nurse emigration trends. This implies a serious risk to domestic service delivery if retention and training are not accelerated (Amir and Ata, 2025; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025).

A further cost of migration is that emigration can reduce the state’s return on both public and private investment in education where skilled cohorts settle abroad permanently, a point that is especially relevant in the case of student migration pipelines. At the same time, micro-level evidence from the State Bank of Pakistan indicates that permanent residency abroad can reduce remittances as migrants become integrated and reunify their families overseas. Khan and Urooj similarly note that migrants who have settled abroad permanently

with their immediate families tend to remit less than the more temporary Gulf-based workers. For this reason, long-term “brain gain” through remittances cannot be assumed; it is not guaranteed unless supported by channels for investment, return, and circulation (Naeem, Khaliq, and Shah, 2026; Khan and Urooj, 2023).

Policy recommendations

Policy should aim to shift Pakistan away from what is often a one-way brain drain dynamic towards circular migration and brain gain, without violating rights and without denying the economic reality that migration will continue. Just as importantly, policy should aim to convert remittances from a short-term survival flow into a development flow by directing their macroeconomic effects towards reserve accumulation, productive investment, and domestic opportunity rather than exchange-rate overvaluation, consumption-led dependence, or speculative non-tradable sectors (Mian, 2025).

There should be no attempt to stop emigration through coercion. International human rights standards recognise the right to leave one’s country. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms in Article 13 that everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own (United Nations, 1948). Likewise, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights affirms in Article 12 the freedom to leave any country, including one’s own, subject only to narrow and legally defined restrictions (United Nations, 1966). Domestically, Pakistan’s constitutional framework also protects freedom of movement within Pakistan, reflecting that mobility is treated as a fundamental right subject to lawful and reasonable restrictions (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012). Therefore, a policy brief that proposes “blocking” exits would be normatively weak, legally contestable, and likely counterproductive, as it could push migration into irregular channels.

Policy should instead focus on reducing the “push” factors by expanding dignified domestic opportunity at scale. Pakistan’s labour force expansion shows that job creation must be treated as a central long-term economic constraint rather than a secondary social policy issue (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025). Practical steps include maintaining macroeconomic stability to support private investment and exports, targeting labour-intensive growth in tradable sectors and services, and improving job quality through formalisation. The World Bank’s emphasis on sustaining reforms for growth and jobs is consistent with this direction (World Bank, 2025). Since informality remains extremely high, policies that reduce the cost of formalisation, such as simplified taxation for small and medium enterprises, digital compliance tools, and predictable regulation, are critical if employment is to become a genuine career pathway that can compete with overseas opportunities (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025).

Policy must also invest in skills that raise both domestic productivity and workers’ bargaining power abroad, while also making it worthwhile for them to remain in Pakistan. Pakistan’s own official publications identify upskilling and certification as pressing needs and point to the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission and the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority as crucial actors in producing skilled and qualified labour (Ministry of Finance 2024; Gallup Pakistan 2025). At the same time, evidence shows that digital platform work remains only a small share of overall employment, with online gig work accounting for around 2.9 per cent of total employment in Labour Force Survey estimates. This suggests that the scaling up of high-quality remote work and exportable digital services will require deliberate policy rather than mere market spontaneity (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025). A proper “stay package” for high-demand sectors such as information technology, health, engineering, and skilled trades should therefore combine training with credible local job matching, wage progression, and workplace safety standards. Otherwise, the state will merely subsidise training for export (Shah and Qazi, 2025).

There should also be return and circulation incentives so that expertise comes back home. Since highly educated migrants and permanent residents abroad tend to remit less over time, Pakistan's brain gain strategy should not rely solely on remittances. It should actively seek to monetise diaspora expertise through return and hybrid engagement (Naeem, Khaliq, and Shah, 2026). A practical package could include fast-track recognition of internationally acquired credentials, time-bound income tax relief for returnees in priority sectors, competitive return fellowships linking diaspora professionals to universities, hospitals, and industry, and startup facilitation for diaspora investors through seed matching tied to local hiring. The need for better reintegration and stronger diaspora engagement is already visible in reviews of Pakistan's migration policy ecosystem and in draft policy discussions (Qaisrani, Rashid, and Samad, 2022). Financial platforms and incentives should also be improved so that they become routes for diaspora investment rather than merely channels for transfers. Survey-based evidence from the State Bank of Pakistan suggests that usability, trust, and incentives all affect engagement with formal schemes (Naeem, Khaliq, and Shah, 2026).

A remittance strategy by itself is not enough. Pakistan should certainly improve formal transfer channels through cheaper, easier, and more trusted financial products. However, it should also do much more to channel diaspora resources into greenfield investment, export-oriented sectors, and technology-intensive activities instead of treating remittances merely as household transfers. Mian argues that stronger reserve accumulation during remittance surges, together with a serious foreign direct investment strategy in tradable sectors, would reduce the danger of Dutch disease. Khan and Urooj similarly stress that official intermediaries should improve remittance-transfer products and that workers' skills must be constantly upgraded in order to sustain competitiveness abroad (Mian, 2025; Khan and Urooj, 2023).

Lastly, security and everyday safety must be improved in order to reduce non-economic "exit pressure". The available evidence clearly shows that Pakistan's terrorism burden worsened sharply in 2025, both in domestic security reporting and in global terrorism indices (Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2026; Institute for Economics & Peace, 2026). Although counterterrorism operations are often treated separately from youth policy, migration behaviour also responds to perceived future safety for family life and for children, especially among skilled professionals who have more options. In policy terms, reducing insecurity requires improved intelligence-led policing and better protection of public spaces, stronger prosecution capacity and greater credibility of the rule of law, and targeted interventions in high-risk border and conflict-adjacent areas, which is consistent with the emphasis on borderlands in recent terrorism analysis (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2026). Alongside terrorism, public concern over street crime and theft adds to everyday insecurity. This strengthens the case for prioritising urban safety strategies, including better lighting, safe transport, rapid response, and local accountability, as part of a broader "stay in Pakistan" agenda (Gallup Pakistan, 2025).

Monitoring and evaluation

A brain drain–brain gain strategy should be judged through measurable indicators that track four things: first, who is leaving the country; second, who is returning or at least maintaining productive engagement with Pakistan; third, whether opportunity and safety within the country are improving; and fourth, whether remittance inflows are being translated into broader macroeconomic improvements rather than merely financing higher consumption. The current evidence also points to a persistent problem of data availability and reliability. Return migration is not properly measured, and even the data on outward migration may be incomplete because skilled workers leave through channels that bypass the registration system (Shah et al., 2024; Mian, 2025).

A further weakness lies in the state's limited knowledge of its own national human resource profile. Pakistan does not appear to have a sufficiently integrated and up-to-date mapping of how many trained professionals it possesses across different sectors, where these professionals are located, whether they are employed in the fields for which they were trained, and in which sectors shortages are most severe. This is important because the issue is not simply one of aggregate out-migration. In some sectors, trained workers may already be unemployed or underemployed, meaning that emigration functions partly as an outlet for domestic labour market absorption failures. In other sectors, however, even a modest level of outward migration may worsen already serious shortages. Without a clearer understanding of sectoral surpluses, shortages, and skills mismatches, policy risks treating all skilled migration as either a loss or a gain, when in reality its effects are uneven and differ from one profession to another.

A practical monitoring framework should begin with baseline outflows and their composition. This should include annual Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) registered outflows, which stood at 687,246 up to November 2025, together with official skill-category data such as 45,687 highly skilled workers and 22,760 highly qualified workers registered in 2023 (Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, 2025). It should also examine the education mobility pipeline, including the number of UK-sponsored study visas granted to Pakistani main applicants, which reached 30,781 in the year ending December 2025, as well as Pakistani student enrolment in the United States, which stood at 13,165 in 2024–25 (Home Office, 2026).

Any serious framework must also track brain gain-related flows and outcomes. The most obvious starting point is workers' remittances, which reached US\$38.3 billion in FY25 and US\$26.5 billion during July–February FY26. However, volume alone is not sufficient. The quality of remittance inflows is equally important, including the extent to which they contribute to reserve accumulation during remittance surges, the degree to which diaspora investment is directed towards productive sectors rather than real estate, and whether exchange-rate or export-performance outcomes indicate that such inflows are strengthening competitiveness rather than concealing structural weakness (State Bank of Pakistan, 2025; Mian 2025; Khan and Urooj, 2023). For this reason, additional remittance-use indicators should include the share of remittances sent through formal channels, the uptake of diaspora investment instruments, participation in return-fellowship schemes, and the sectoral destination of diaspora capital. These indicators are necessary because rising remittances can easily coexist with weak exports, low investment, and continuing losses of high-skilled workers (Mian, 2025; Khan and Urooj, 2023).

Alongside this, domestic opportunity indicators must be monitored closely. These should include labour force expansion, youth unemployment, which stood at 12.8 per cent for those aged 15–24, the balance between formal and informal employment, and real wage trends as reflected in the 2024–25 Labour Force Survey (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025). Finally, no assessment can be complete without considering security and the rule of law. Relevant indicators here include the incidence of terrorism and related fatalities, with the Global Terrorism Index reporting 1,139 terrorism deaths and 1,045 incidents in 2025, while PIPS recorded 699 attacks and 1,034 fatalities in the same year, together with broader rule-of-law and “Order and Security” performance measures (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2026).

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Reporting Rights Violations and Faith-Based Persecution in Pakistan

Media Workshop, Peshawar

The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) organized a media training workshop titled “Reporting Rights Violations and Faith-Based Persecution in Pakistan” at the Peshawar Press Club. The workshop brought together mainstream journalists and social media content creators to strengthen their capacity for ethical, balanced, and responsible reporting on conflict, rights violations, faith-based persecution, and hate speech. Through discussions and practical exercises, participants were introduced to methods for identifying, documenting, and reporting incidents without amplifying tensions, and were also briefed on techniques for spotting fake news on social media.

Dr Syed Irfan Ashraf of the University of Peshawar highlighted that journalism in conflict settings should be treated as a form of crisis communication rather than routine messaging. He stressed that journalists must remain conscious of whether their reporting is merely describing conflict or unintentionally reproducing and deepening it. He also underlined the importance of understanding the relevant legal framework and the structural inequalities surrounding incidents of faith-based violence.

Dr Qibla Ayaz, Judge of the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court, emphasized the wider consequences of irresponsible reporting, referring to the Sialkot lynching of a Sri Lankan factory manager over blasphemy allegations. He noted that the incident had the potential to trigger attacks on Muslims in Sri Lanka, but that such a threat was averted through responsible mainstream media coverage. He also drew attention to the destructive role social media has played in the sectarian conflict in Kurram district.

Journalist and anchorperson Rifatullah Orakzai spoke about the professional challenges facing journalists, including economic pressures, online trolling, and the growing demands of technological change. PIPS President Muhammad Amir Rana stressed that journalists must develop the skills needed to adapt to a media landscape increasingly shaped by social media, adding that in-depth reporting and coverage of underreported stories remain essential for professional relevance. Journalist and media trainer Imran Mukhtar also briefed participants on constitutional and legal provisions related to freedom of expression and urged them to maintain personal fact-checking checklists rather than relying solely on unverified material circulating online.





Shades of Tomorrow & Desert Cinema for Peace

Tharparkar, Sindh

The Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), through its Social Action Projects initiative, supported two youth-led community interventions in Tharparkar on February 17, 2026, aimed at promoting climate resilience, social cohesion, and interfaith understanding. Implemented under the title “Shades of Tomorrow & Desert Cinema for Peace,” the initiative engaged more than 40 beneficiaries and created a constructive platform for young people from different faith backgrounds to work together on practical community needs.

As part of the “Shades of Tomorrow” plantation drive, youth volunteers planted drought-resistant saplings, including neem, moringa, and kandi, around the PITP building to help reduce heat stress and improve the local environment. The activity also included an awareness session on climate change, the importance of native trees, and shared responsibility for maintenance. In the second activity, “Desert Cinema for Peace,” local residents gathered for an outdoor screening of short films on coexistence, humanity, and social issues, followed by a dialogue circle led by trained youth facilitators. The initiative helped strengthen cross-faith friendships, encouraged respectful discussion on sensitive issues, and demonstrated how youth-led action can promote both environmental care and peaceful community engagement in desert communities.





About PIPS

Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) is an Islamabad-based research and advocacy organization. The Institute offers a range of consultancy services through a combination of independent research and analysis, innovative academic programs, and hands-on training and support that serve the following basic themes: Conflict analysis and peacebuilding, dialogue, prevent/counter violent extremism (P/CVE), internal and regional security, and media for peace and democracy. PIPS conducts structured dialogues, focused group discussions, and national and international seminars to understand the issues listed earlier and also strengthen partnerships. The outcomes of PIPS research and planned events have extensively been reported in the mainstream media which adds to its credibility as an active and well networked civil society organization. PIPS policy reports and recommendations on security and CVE have frequently been cited in various works and included in state policy debates and documents. Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) conducted a research study in 2024-25 under the title “Building Bridges, Fostering Tolerance and Inclusivity among Youth”. The program was particularly designed to engage Pakistan's youth from diverse backgrounds. The participants belonging to Madrassas, universities, media and social activists were engaged to strengthen their support for freedom of faith, and religious tolerance and harmony. It builds upon the philosophical approach that youth are part of a solution to challenges thrown by violent extremism and communal and sectarian discord.



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