

## Collaborative Philanthropy in Pakistan with a Gender Lens

### Roundtable

Gender inequality remains a significant barrier to sustainable development in Asia, where women and girls continue to face disparities in health, education, economic opportunities, and leadership. Despite progress in certain areas, the gender gap in Asia remains wide, with women and girls disproportionately affected by poverty, violence, and limited access to resources (UN Women and UN DESA 2023). The Asian Venture Philanthropy Association (AVPN)'s Gender Equality Platform (GEP) is at the forefront of efforts to mobilise capital towards closing these gender gaps. The platform acknowledges that achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) is essential for the broader success of the SDGs. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a crucial driver of economic growth and social stability (United Nations n.d). Research indicates that when women are empowered, they contribute to the health, productivity, and resilience of their communities, leading to broader socioeconomic benefits (Fluchtmann et al., 2024).

The concept of 'gender lens investing' involves considering gender-based factors throughout the investment process, from identifying opportunities to measuring impact. This approach ensures that investments not only address gender-specific needs but also contribute to systemic change by challenging the structural barriers that perpetuate inequality.

In Pakistan, gender inequality is particularly pronounced, with the country ranking 151<sup>st</sup> out of 156 on the Global Gender Gap Index (WEF 2023). Women in Pakistan face significant challenges in accessing education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, exacerbated by cultural norms and institutional barriers. These disparities not only undermine their well-being but also hinder the country's overall development (Amnesty International 2023).

Philanthropic initiatives in Pakistan, particularly those that apply a gender lens, are crucial for addressing these challenges. AVPN's GEP has been instrumental in mobilising resources for gender-focused interventions in Pakistan, supporting initiatives that empower women both economically and socially. For example, AVPN has engaged with local stakeholders to develop gender-sensitive programmes that address the specific needs of women in various regions of the country (FWRPD 2024).

The effectiveness of gender-focused philanthropy in Pakistan is contingent upon the country's policy environment. While Pakistan has made commitments to gender equality through national and international frameworks, implementation of these policies remains inconsistent. Philanthropic organisations can play a key role in advocating for stronger enforcement of gender equality laws and in supporting grassroots movements that promote women's rights (Bofu-Tawamba et al., 2024).

The integration of a gender lens into philanthropy and the strategic alignment of philanthropic efforts with national policies are crucial for addressing the complex socioeconomic challenges in Pakistan and Asia more broadly. Leveraging AVPN's gender giving principles, this *Roundtable Discussion* will focus on the critical importance of integrating a gender lens into philanthropic efforts, particularly in the Asian and Pakistani context, where cultural, social, and economic factors often intersect to exacerbate gender inequalities. The discussions aim to:

- Explore integration of a gender lens into philanthropy across Asia, addressing gender disparities in health, education, and economic opportunities for women and girls.
- Focus on implementing gender lens philanthropy in Pakistan to overcome challenges in education, healthcare, and workforce participation, fostering socioeconomic progress.
- Showcase AVPN's Gender Equality Platform's initiatives in driving gender-focused interventions aligned with SDG 5, promoting structural changes across Pakistan and the broader Asian region.

- Present practical strategies for donors to adopt a gender lens approach, emphasising collaboration with local stakeholders and grassroots movements for greater, sustainable impact.
- Highlight the role of philanthropic organisations in advocating for gender equality legislation and aligning efforts with national and international frameworks for more effective outcomes.
- Demonstrate how empowering women through gender lens philanthropy contributes to economic growth, social stability, and sustainable development across Asia.

## References

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