

Wage inequality persists, says gender gap report

ISLAMABAD: Despite an additional quarter of a billion women entering the global workforce since 2006, wage inequality persists, with women only now earning what men did a decade ago, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2015.

The global gender gap across health, education, economic opportunity and politics has narrowed by only 4 per cent in the past 10 years, with the economic gap closing by just 3pc, suggesting it will take another 118 years — or until 2133 — to close this gap completely, says the report released by the World Economic Forum this week.

For educational attainment, one of the four pillars mentioned in the report, the picture is mixed. Overall, the gender gap now stands at 95pc, or 5pc away from parity. This is an improvement on the 92pc where it stood in 2006.

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Worldwide, 25 countries have now closed their gap completely, with the most progress having been made in university education, where women now make up the majority of students in nearly 100 countries.

But progress has not been universal, with 22pc of all countries measured continuously over the past 10 years seeing an actual widening of the gap between men and women when it comes to education. There is also a marked lack of correlation between getting more women in education and their ability to earn a living particularly through skilled or leadership roles.

Political empowerment, the fourth pillar measured by the index, is the widest. Worldwide, only 23pc of this gender gap has been closed although this area has also seen the most improvement, up by 9pc from 14pc in 2006.

Only two countries have reached parity in parliament and only four have reached parity on ministerial roles.

In the Gender Gap Index, the lowest performing countries in Asia and the Pacific are Fiji (121), Iran (141) and Pakistan (144). The Philippines (7) remains the region’s highest-ranked country, followed by New Zealand (10) and Australia (36).

With no one country having closed its overall gender gap, Nordic nations remain the most gender-equal societies in the world. As last year, the leading four nations are Iceland (1), Norway (2), Finland (3) and Sweden (4), with Norway overtaking Finland.

Sixteen countries have closed less than 50pc of the economic participation and opportunity gap, including 11 from the Middle East and North Africa region. Iran, Jordan, Pakistan, Syria and Yemen hold the last five spots on this sub-index.

The Asia and Pacific region has closed more than 67pc of its overall gender gap. It has improved its political empowerment performance since 2014 and remains first globally with more than 25pc of the gender gap closed.

However, the region ranks second from the bottom on the overall index and economic participation and opportunity sub-index, with 54pc of the gender gap closed. On health and survival, the region has regressed since 2014 and, once again, scores last with less than 95pc of the gender gap closed.

When compared to 2006, the region is the most improved on political empowerment and second most improved on educational attainment and on the overall index, report says.

The region is the least improved on health and survival despite being home to three of the five most improved countries on this sub-index. Of the 24 countries in the region, 17 have improved and seven have regressed.

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