POLICY DIALOGUE REPORT

Transforming Special Education in Punjab

3 September 2026 Lahore, Punjab



Curriculum Reforms, Teacher Quality and Inclusive Services for Better Learning Outcomes of Children with Disabilities

Special Education Department,
Government of Punjab & UNICEF
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Special Education Department, Government of Punjab, in collaboration with UNICEF, convened the Policy Dialogue on Transforming Special Education in Punjab in Lahore on 3 September 2026. Government departments, universities, practitioners, technical experts, development partners, persons with disabilities, students and families contributed to the dialogue. Discussions moved from evidence to practical reform choices, with children's learning, participation, wellbeing, transition and greater independence at the centre.

Punjab has established a substantial special education system, with 303 institutions, more than 41,240 enrolled students and 4,792 teaching posts across six broad disability categories. This provides a strong foundation. The next phase needs greater attention to the quality of learning and support, teacher competence and meaningful inclusion. The 2024 Institutional and Capacity Assessment of Special Education Department reported an average learning score of about 47.5 per cent and identified uneven curriculum adaptation, differences in institutional readiness, and limited pathways to vocational training, higher education and employment. Census 2023 data indicate that more than one million children with functional limitations live in Punjab. Inconsistencies across available datasets also underline the need for better identification, mapping and integrated tracking.

Curriculum reform and teacher quality emerged as closely connected priorities. The dialogue supported differentiated learning pathways, from the national curriculum with accessibility support to adapted curricula and functional and life-skills pathways. Individualized Education Plans, Universal Design for Learning, accessible materials, sign language and Braille, vocational orientation and assessment of individual progress were emphasized. Teacher development should connect pre-service education and supervised practice with induction, mentoring, continuing professional development, professional standards and career progression.

There was broad agreement on moving beyond a binary choice between special and mainstream education. Punjab needs a continuum of specialized, integrated and inclusive services, guided by each child's needs. Special Education Institutes should retain their specialized role while progressively providing assessment, referral, teacher guidance, assistive technology and specialist support to the wider education system. Mainstream teachers will also need appropriate preparation for inclusion.

The dialogue also highlighted early identification, neighborhood access, multidisciplinary support, assistive and digital technology, responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), stronger data systems, sustainable financing and transition to further education, skills and employment. Technology should complement, rather than replace, teachers and human support. Children, persons with Special Educational Needs Disabilities (SEND) and their families should have accessible opportunities to inform services and accountability.

These directions were consolidated through the Lahore Declaration on Transforming Special Education in Punjab. It provided a shared vision with five clear commitments covering curriculum and learning; teacher quality and professional standards; specialised, integrated and inclusive services; digital and AI-enabled learning; and shared responsibility and sustainable reform. It calls for curriculum reform priorities and educator competencies, a Teacher Quality Reform Framework, a Future Special Education Service Delivery Roadmap, and agreed implementation and monitoring arrangements.

The central message from Lahore Declaration.

Punjab's next phase of reform should move from access to access with quality; from curriculum coverage to meaningful learning; from teacher qualifications to professional competence; from physical accessibility to genuine participation; from separate service systems to a continuum of support; from fragmented responsibilities to shared accountability; and from activities and inputs to measurable outcomes for children.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The Government of Punjab has made sustained efforts to expand education and support services for children with disabilities. Since the establishment of a separate Special Education Department, the province has developed a substantial institutional network and introduced education, transport, assistive and rehabilitation support. At the Policy Dialogue, the Department presented a current landscape of 303 institutions, more than 41,240 enrolled students and 4,792 teaching posts, serving learners across six broad disability categories. This provides a strong institutional foundation for the next phase of reform.

The scale of the remaining challenge is also significant. Drawing on Census 2023, more than one million children aged 5–16 years in Punjab are estimated to have functional limitations. Inconsistencies across available datasets point to the need for stronger identification, mapping and integrated learner tracking. Expanding access therefore remains important, including for children who could attend neighbourhood schools where reasonable accommodation and appropriate support are available.

Recognizing the need to strengthen both access and quality, the Special Education Department, with UNICEF support, undertook an Institutional and Capacity Assessment of Special Education Institutes across Punjab in 2024–25. The assessment examined institutional arrangements, service delivery, human resources and capacity needs. It highlighted the close links between curriculum, teacher competencies, professional development, specialized services, technology, institutional coordination and monitoring.

Against this background, the Special Education Department, Government of Punjab, in collaboration with UNICEF, convened the Policy Dialogue on “Transforming Special Education in Punjab: Curriculum Reforms, Teacher Quality and Inclusive Services for Better Learning Outcomes of Children with Disabilities” on 3 September 2026 in Lahore.

The dialogue brought together representatives of government departments, universities and academic institutions, education professionals, practitioners, technical experts, development partners, persons with disabilities, students and families. 103 participants attended the event and list in Annexed. It provided a common platform to consider evidence and experience and to identify practical directions for the future of special education in Punjab.

The dialogue was designed as a decision-oriented process. It recognized that no single education model can respond to the needs of every child. The discussion therefore considered how specialized, integrated and inclusive approaches can form a responsive continuum of education and support, guided by each child’s learning and support needs.

Purpose of the Policy Dialogue

The Policy Dialogue was convened to build a shared understanding of the priority reforms required to improve the quality and responsiveness of special education in Punjab and to agree a practical direction for taking these reforms forward. It enabled government institutions, universities, practitioners, persons with disabilities and development partners to consider the evidence together and identify where policy, institutional arrangements and classroom practice need to evolve.The dialogue aimed to:

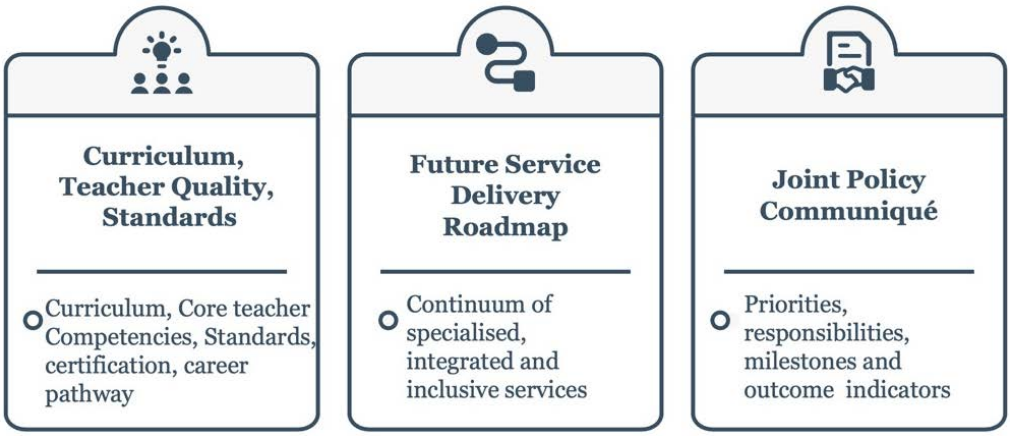
- Agree priority directions for curriculum reform, teacher competencies, professional development and professional standards;
- Consider how specialized, integrated and inclusive education can operate as a continuum responding to different learning and support needs;
- Identify practical measures to strengthen institutional coordination, technology, data, financing and accountability; and
- Build agreement on priorities, responsibilities, milestones and expected outcomes for taking the reform agenda forward.

The dialogue therefore moved beyond identifying challenges. It focused on what needs to change, how reforms can be taken forward, and what measurable difference they should make for children with disabilities.

Expected Outcomes

The dialogue was structured around three connected outcomes. The first focused on curriculum reform, teacher quality and professional standards. The second addressed the future model of service delivery. The third sought to establish a shared policy commitment and direction for implementation.

Expected Outcome from Policy Dialogue



Outcome 1: Curriculum, Teacher Quality and Professional Standards

Establish a clearer direction for curriculum reform and teacher quality, including core educator competencies, professional standards, certification and career pathways. The aim was to better connect what children need to learn with how teachers are prepared, supported and professionally developed.

Outcome 2: Future Special Education Service Delivery Roadmap

Establish the direction for a future service delivery roadmap based on a continuum of specialized, integrated and inclusive education and support, recognizing that children have different learning, communication, developmental and support needs.

Outcome 3: Lahore Declaration and Implementation Direction as Joint Policy Communique

Establish a shared policy direction for the next phase of reform and define how the dialogue outcomes should move towards implementation. The deliberations were consolidated through the Lahore Declaration on Transforming Special Education in Punjab, which calls for curriculum reform priorities and educator competencies, a Teacher Quality Reform Framework, a Future Special Education Service Delivery Roadmap, and agreed arrangements for implementation and monitoring.

POLICY DIALOGUE: EVIDENCE, PERSPECTIVES AND REFORM PRIORITIES

The Policy Dialogue followed a structured process. It moved from evidence and lived experience to discussion, prioritization and agreement. The opening session set the Government's reform direction. This was followed by findings from the Institutional and Capacity Assessment, a departmental presentation on curriculum and learning, lived experiences of learners and families, a moderated panel discussion and two working groups. The final sessions brought these perspectives together and identified a shared direction for reform. The session was moderated by Ms. Sehr Raza Jafri from UNICEF and Ms Syeda Nabiha Zia, from Special Education Department of Government of Punjab.



Syeda Nabiha Zia,
Assistant Director (Psychology)
Special Education Department Punjab


Sehr Raza Jafri, Education Specialist
UNICEF Punjab

Opening and Policy Framing:

Mr. Shoeb Iqbal Syed, Secretary, Special Education Department Punjab, opened the dialogue around three connected reform questions. First, should curriculum simply be adapted, or should learning be designed around the developmental, functional and communication needs of children? Second, do professional qualifications translate into the competencies which teachers need in the classroom? Third, does inclusion mean placement alone, or does it enable a child to learn, participate and progress? These questions positioned curriculum, teacher quality and inclusion as connected parts of the same reform agenda. The focus was not only on access to education, but on the quality and relevance of the experience after a child enters the system.

The Secretary highlighted the scale of Punjab's special education system: 303 institutions, more than 41,240 enrolled students and 4,792 teaching posts across six broad disability categories. This provides an important foundation. The next phase of reform should increasingly focus on what happens in classrooms and services. Progress should be judged not only by institutions established or children enrolled, but also by what children learn, what they can do and how meaningfully they participate.


Mr Shoeb Iqbal Syed
Secretary Special Education Department, Punjab

The opening presentation also recognized that reform extends beyond the mandate of one institution. Universities and Higher Education institutions have an important role in pre-service preparation, supervised practice, research and professional competencies. Punjab Education Curriculum Training and Assessment Authority (PECTAA) can contribute to responsive curricula, accessible learning and appropriate assessment. School Education has a central role in developing inclusive pathways and preparing mainstream teachers. Special Education brings disability-specific expertise, specialised services and field experience. The aim is to bring these roles together around a focused and measurable reform framework.

Scene Setting Documentary: Special Education Department

The next session followed by a video documentary that highlighted the current context of special education in the province, what are key approaches and mechanism that are in place, and what reforms have already taken place along with the future vision. The documentary has a clear message from the senior leadership of the special education department along with voices of the communities.

Opening Remarks

Mr Ramiz Bahbudov, Chief Field Office, UNICEF Punjab, reinforced the rights-based and child-centred direction of the dialogue. He appreciated the Special Education Department for organising this important policy dialogue around transforming the special education in the province. He highlighted the following points:

First, curriculum must begin with how children learn. It should be accessible and flexible, grounded in clear learning progressions and responsive to diverse communication, sensory, cognitive and functional needs. It must balance academic learning with life skills, independence and pathways to further education, skills and employment. Assessment must also allow children to demonstrate learning in different ways, supported by accessible materials and appropriate assistive and digital technologies.

Second, inclusion is more than placement. It means that a child is welcomed, supported, learning and progressing. Punjab needs a continuum of support: stronger inclusive practice in mainstream schools, effective referral and transition pathways and high-quality specialized services for children who need

them. Specialist expertise should strengthen the whole education system. Families and children with disabilities must help shape solutions and hold institutions accountable for results.



Mr Ramiz Behbudov
Chief Field Office. UNICEF Punjab Lahore

Third, no education system can exceed the capacity of its teachers. Reform must connect competency-based pre-service preparation, substantial supervised practice, mentoring, continuous professional development and professional standards. Special educators need strong disability-specific expertise as well as inclusive pedagogy, assessment, classroom management and technology skills. Mainstream teachers also need the confidence and practical support to teach diverse learners. Clear career pathways should recognize expertise and sustain motivation.

UNICEF reaffirmed its technical and programme support to this Government-led reform process.

Institutional Capacity Assessment of Special Education Institutes in Punjab:

Mr Niaz Ullah Khan presented the key findings, learning and recommendations especially around curriculum, teachers' capacity, institutional readiness, data and inclusive service delivery. This assessment was conducted in 2024, and some of the findings may not fully represent conditions at the time of this September 2026 dialogue, as some of the recommendations are being implemented since 2025. However, the assessment waspresented to serve as a baseline for discussing reform priorities rather than as a statement of the current status of every institution.

The assessment reported an average learning score of about 47.5 per cent, with variation across disability groups. Curriculum adaptation was taking place, but often through institution-specific practices rather than a consistent framework. This highlighted the need for differentiated learning pathways, stronger use of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and assessment that measures individual learning and functional progress.

Teacher and institutional capacity also varied. The assessment identified vacancies, uneven student–teacher ratios and shortages of allied professionals. It also found differences in leadership, accessibility, safeguarding and resources. These findings pointed to the need for clearer teacher competencies, needs-

based professional development, more responsive human-resource planning and stronger multidisciplinary support.



Support services were another concern. Transport, rehabilitation, audiology and sensory facilities, accessible toilets and safeguarding arrangements were not consistently available. These are not peripheral services. For many children, they directly affect whether they can attend, participate and learn.

The assessment also highlighted the much wider challenge of children outside education. Analysis drawing on Census 2023 and available enrolment data suggested a substantial gap between the number of children with functional limitations and those reached through education services. Differences between available datasets mean that any single estimate should be treated with caution. The immediate priority is therefore stronger identification, mapping and integrated learner tracking.

Transition beyond school emerged as a further system challenge. Vocational opportunities were limited, and available trades were not always aligned with labour-market opportunities. Pathways into higher education, skills development and employment were also limited. Fragmented datasets made it difficult to follow children across services. A unique child identifier and integrated learner-tracking system were among the measures proposed.

The assessment brought these issues together around five priorities: curriculum; workforce and continuing professional development; institutional readiness; an inclusive service continuum; and transition and accountability. The key message underlines that Individual improvements will have limited effect unless they are connected through a coherent and measurable system.

Curriculum Adaptation: Moving towards Meaningful Learning:

The curriculum discussion started from a simple principle: equity does not mean identical provision. Children have different learning, communication, developmental, functional and accessibility needs. A single curriculum pathway cannot respond equally well to all learners.

Three broad pathways are considered. The first is the national curriculum with accessibility and assistive support for learners who can follow grade-level expectations. The second is an adapted or differentiated

curriculum, with appropriate changes to content, pace, teaching and assessment. The third is a functional and life-skills pathway for learners requiring substantially different learning outcomes.



Dr. Khaula Munawar Minhas
Deputy Director (Curriculum)
Special Education Department, Punjab

The presentation also highlighted disability-specific requirements. Learners with hearing impairment need stronger language access, standardised sign-language vocabulary, visual resources and appropriate assessment. Learners with visual impairment require Braille and accessible formats. Learners with intellectual disabilities may require a stronger functional pathway linking learning with communication, daily living, vocational preparation and transition.

Across these pathways, teacher competence is critical. Disability-specific pedagogy and communication skills need to be combined with appropriate subject knowledge. Curriculum reform cannot succeed if teachers do not have the skills, materials and professional support needed to translate it into classroom practice.

Curriculum reform is therefore more than revising documents. It requires practical IEPs, differentiated instruction, accessible and multimodal materials, flexible pacing and appropriate assessment. Universal Design for Learning can provide an important organising approach. New models also need to be supported by teacher preparation, practical guidance and testing before wider implementation.

Most importantly, learning should connect with a child's future. Academic achievement remains important, but education should also strengthen communication, functional skills, digital competencies, social and emotional development, vocational readiness and preparation for further education, employment and greater independence. This direction is also reflected in the subsequent working-group deliberations.

Inclusive Education: From Access to Participation and Learning:

Inclusive education presentation broadened the discussion from specialised provision to the wider education system.Started from defining the inclusion and inclusive education, it highlighted that Special Education Institutes alone cannot reach all children with disabilities. A stronger connection is therefore needed between specialised expertise and the mainstream education system.

The presentation underline that inclusion is mainly about ramps, accessible buildings and toilets. Physical accessibility remains important, but meaningful inclusion also requires prepared teachers, accessible learning materials and support within the school. Mainstream teachers need basic competencies to

identify and teach children with different learning needs. They also need access to specialist advice through resource teachers, itinerant support or other appropriate arrangements.



The presentation proposed the nearest government school as the first point of access, where the child can learn effectively with reasonable accommodation and appropriate support. This requires better identification of children at district and community level, fewer admission barriers, stronger links with health and community services for early identification, and clearer referral pathways when specialized support is required. It also highlighted the value of piloting workable models before wider scale-up.

Inclusive education was presented as a shared institutional responsibility. School Education has responsibility for mainstream schools and teachers. Special Education brings assessment and specialist expertise. Higher Education and teacher education institutions shape the preparation of future teachers. Health services contribute to early identification and referral, while district authorities, communities and families have important roles in enrolment and continued participation.

The central message was that inclusive education should move from an infrastructure-first approach towards a child-, classroom- and support-centred approach. The aim is not simply to place a child in a mainstream school. It is to ensure that the child can participate, learn and progress there, while retaining access to specialized support when needed.

Experiences and Aspirations of Children and Families:

The 'Journey through System' session brought lived experience and family perspectives into the centre of the policy discussion. The session presented two case studies: the educational journey of a blind learner enrolled in a special education school in Sahiwal, and the experience of a mother supporting her two daughters with hearing impairments through their education. Together, these journeys illustrated how education pathways are shaped not only by curriculum and teaching, but also by family support, accessibility, technology, reasonable accommodation and the ability to move between different stages of education.

The experiences shared during the session also highlighted the importance of committed teachers and appropriate learning support. At the same time, they pointed to practical barriers that may emerge or become more pronounced as learners progress through the system.



These include gaps in accessible learning resources, vocational opportunities, technology, family guidance and reasonable accommodation during transition to higher levels of education.A key message was that school completion is not the end of the education pathway. Children and young people need opportunities to move into further education, skills development, employment and adult life. Transition therefore needs to be planned rather than left to children and families to navigate on their own.

The session also reinforced an important principle for future reform: children and persons with disabilities should have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions that affect them. Families remain essential partners, particularly in communication, care and transition. Their participation, however, should complement rather than replace the voice of the child.

Feedback and participation mechanisms should therefore be safe, accessible and regular. More importantly, children and families should be able to see how their experiences influence service design and improvement. This principle continued through the panel discussion and became part of the wider reform direction.

PANEL DISCUSSION: FROM EVIDENCE TO REFORM CHOICES

The panel discussion provided a bridge between the evidence presented during the opening sessions and the reform choices facing Punjab. The session was moderated by Mr Niaz Ullah Khan, Technical Lead. It brought together perspectives from young people, universities, Higher Education, School Education, PECTAA and the private education technology sector. The discussion focused on what needs to change, who needs to act and how reform can improve learning, participation and future opportunities for children with disabilities.

The panel included:

1. Ms Taqwa Ahmad, UNICEF Pakistan Youth Advocate
2. Dr Muhammad Ali Shah, Vice Chancellor, University of the Punjab, Lahore
3. Dr Aqif Anwar Chaudhry, Vice Chancellor, University of Education, Lahore
4. Dr Sajjad Mobin, Vice Chancellor, University of Okara
5. Mr Ghulam Farid, Secretary, Higher Education Department, Government of Punjab
6. Mr Mudassir Riaz Malik, Secretary, School Education Department, Government of Punjab
7. Mr Muhammad Musa Ali Bukhari, Chief Executive Officer, PECTAA
8. Mr Umair Babar Chishti, Global Director of Partnerships, Noon EdTech

The moderator used targeted questions for individual panellists rather than seeking general observations. These explored curriculum reform, teacher competencies, university research and professional preparation, accessibility in higher education, pathways between special and mainstream education, institutional coordination, differentiated learning, technology and responsible use of AI. The discussion also considered financing, accountability and the role of children and families.



This resulted many key reflections. Universities have an important role beyond awarding qualifications. They can strengthen interdisciplinary research, improve pre-service teacher education, provide meaningful supervised practicum and generate evidence on what works for different groups of learners. Higher Education also highlighted the need to translate inclusion commitments into practical accessibility and strong coordination across institutions. School Education emphasized stronger pathways for children

who can be appropriately supported in mainstream schools, alongside better preparation of mainstream teachers and use of existing data systems. PECTAA highlighted differentiated instruction, individualized planning and a broader approach to learning, living and working. Technology contributors demonstrated the potential of multimodal and AI-enabled learning, while recognizing that technology should strengthen rather than replace teachers and human support.

The discussion did not suggest a single reform measure. Instead, it pointed towards a connected reform agenda covering curriculum, teachers, professional standards, service delivery, technology, institutional arrangements, financing and participation. These areas are summarized below.

Key Reform Areas Emerging from the Panel Discussion &Participants Reflections

a) **Children, young people and families:** The participation of children and young people was not treated as a separate issue from reform. It was recognized as a principle that should influence how policies and services are designed, implemented and reviewed. Children, young people and persons with disabilities should not be viewed only as beneficiaries. They have direct experience of the barriers within education systems and should have accessible and safe ways to influence decisions, provide feedback and report problems. Importantly, there should also be mechanisms to show how their feedback has been considered and acted upon. Families are essential partners, particularly in early identification, continuity of support and transition. Their involvement should be strengthened while recognizing the evolving voice and agency of the child or young person. Family participation should support that voice rather than substitute for it.

b) **Curriculum and learning:** Curriculum reform should begin with the learner and the future for which the education system is preparing that learner. Academic achievement remains important, but it is not sufficient on its own. Children also need opportunities to develop communication, functional and life skills, social and emotional competencies, digital skills, vocational readiness and greater independence. Curriculum adaptation should therefore not be understood simply as reducing content. The emphasis should be on making learning accessible, relevant and measurable for children with different abilities and support needs. Differentiated instruction and appropriate assessment can help teachers respond to these differences. Individualized Education Plans can provide a structured basis for identifying learning goals, required support and progress for each child. The discussion also highlighted the importance of preparing children for life beyond the classroom. Curriculum reform should therefore connect learning with participation, independent living, further education, skills development and employment wherever appropriate.

c) **Teacher preparation and professional development:** Teacher quality emerged as one of the most important conditions for successful reform. Curriculum changes will have limited effect unless teachers have the knowledge, practical skills and continuing support needed to use them in classrooms. Participants called for stronger pre-service preparation and more meaningful supervised practicum in special and inclusive education settings. New teachers should enter the profession with practical exposure to different disabilities, differentiated instruction, classroom management, individualized planning, assessment and appropriate use of assistive technology. Induction and mentoring can then support the transition from training to classroom practice. Continuity of professional development should respond to observed competency gaps rather than operate mainly through one-off training. Mainstream teacher education also requires attention. Teachers in regular schools need basic competencies to identify learning difficulties, make reasonable classroom adaptations and support children with mild and moderate disabilities, with access to specialist advice when required.

d) **Professional standards and career pathways:** The panel highlighted the need to define more clearly what competent professional practice looks like in special education. Professional standards could establish the knowledge, competencies, ethical responsibilities and practices expected of special educators and relevant allied professionals. Certification, accreditation and professional licensing were also discussed. Particular attention was given to competencies that require verified proficiency, including disability-specific skills such as sign language. Such competencies should not be assumed on the basis of attendance at short training alone.Any future professional standards or licensing arrangement should, however, be introduced carefully. The purpose should be to improve professional quality rather than create another administrative requirement. A phased and competency-based approach could link standards with pre-service education, continuing professional development, performance, certification and career progression.

e) **Continuum of specialized, integrated and inclusive education:** The discussion moved beyond viewing specialized and inclusive education as competing models. Children have different needs, and these may also change over time. Punjab therefore requires a continuum of support across mainstream, integrated and specialized settings. Placement and support should be informed by the needs and best interests of the child. Early identification, appropriate assessment, reasonable accommodation, referral and transition arrangements are central to such a system. Children should also be able to move between settings where their needs, abilities or circumstances change. The discussion recognized a wider future role for Special Education expertise. Special Education Institutes can continue to provide specialized services while increasingly supporting mainstream schools through assessment, technical advice, teacher support and multidisciplinary outreach. Over time, the nearest appropriate mainstream school could become an entry point for more children who can learn effectively there with reasonable support. This requires preparation of the mainstream system and should not result in children being placed in settings that cannot yet meet their needs.

f) **Technology and assistive support:** Technology offers significant opportunities to widen access to learning, communication and specialist support. The panel discussed assistive devices, accessible digital content, multimodal applications and responsible AI-enabled tools that can adapt learning to different needs and modes of communication. Technology, however, is not a reform in isolation. Effective scale-up requires accessible and locally relevant content, teacher capacity, family orientation, affordability, maintenance and technical support. Data protection and privacy will become increasingly important as digital and AI-enabled applications expand.The discussion was also clear that technology should support human interaction rather than replace it. Teachers, therapists, families and peers remain central to learning and development. The value of technology should therefore be judged by whether it improves access, participation and learning for the child.

g) **Institutional coordination and accountability:** Many of the reforms discussed during the panel fall across institutional mandates. Special Education cannot deliver them alone. School Education, Higher Education, PECTAA, universities, Health and other relevant institutions each hold part of the mandate, expertise or delivery system required. A more structured coordination mechanism is therefore needed. This should establish shared priorities, clearer institutional responsibilities and arrangements for sustained follow-up. Coordination should be linked to implementation rather than limited to periodic meetings. Data provides an important opportunity for greater integration. Existing information systems should be used where feasible rather than creating parallel arrangements. Better sharing and use of data can support identification, referral, transition and tracking of children across services. Clear accountability will also be needed so that agreed reforms can be monitored beyond the policy dialogue.

h) **Financing and results:** The panel recognized that reform would require resources, but also a different way of considering how resources are allocated. Financing should gradually move beyond a predominantly input-based approach and respond more clearly to need, equity and expected educational results. Investment is required not only in buildings and equipment. Teachers, allied professionals, accessible learning materials, assistive technology, transport, digital support, assessment and transition pathways all have recurrent costs. The level of support required by children with different disabilities also varies considerably. Future financing arrangements should therefore consider the nature and intensity of support required, geographical disadvantage, poverty and the cost of delivering appropriate services. At the same time, additional resources should be connected with clearer expectations for access, participation, learning, wellbeing, transition and other measurable results.

WORKING GROUP DELIBERATIONS: FROM PRIORITIES TO ACTION

The participants were moved into two working groups. The purpose was to take the broad reform directions and turn them into practical actions. The groups focused on two connected areas: the quality of teaching and learning, and the future model of special and inclusive education services in Punjab. Both groups were asked to go beyond identifying problems. They considered what should change in practice, which institutions would need to act, how children with disabilities would benefit and how progress could be measured. The discussions therefore connected policy reform with classroom practice, institutional capacity and results for children.



Working Group 1: Curriculum Reform, Teacher Professional Development and Professional Standards

Working Group 1 considered three closely connected questions: what children should learn; what teachers need to know and be able to do; and how professional competence should be developed, demonstrated and recognised. Three specific questions were shared for getting a better understanding of these issues. The group considered these as parts of one teacher-quality reform pathway rather than separate initiatives. The discussion covered curriculum and learner competencies, pre-service teacher preparation, supervised practicum, continuing professional development and professional standards. Participants also considered the institutional roles of the Special Education Department, universities, PECTAA and other relevant bodies.

a) The group considered a need-based curriculum architecture rather than one uniform pathway. Discussion included academic or conceptual learning, executive functioning and functional or life-skills learning. Participants stressed that adaptation should not mean simply deleting content. Visual cues, accessible materials, Universal Design for Learning, assistive technology and differentiated teaching should help learners access and progress through relevant learning goals.

b) Special educators require competencies in differentiated instruction, disability-specific pedagogy, classroom assessment, Individualised Education Plan development and implementation, communication approaches, behaviour support, assistive technology, accessible and multimodal teaching and child-centred planning. Subject knowledge also matters,

particularly where teachers are expected to teach academic subjects at primary and secondary levels.





c) Academic preparation needs to be complemented by structured and supervised practice. Stronger partnerships between universities and Special Education Institutes can give prospective teachers experience with diverse learners, lesson planning, Individualized Education Plans, assessment and feedback. Participants also supported exposure to special and inclusive education within mainstream teacher-education programmes.

d) Continuing professional development should respond to identified competency gaps and classroom needs. It should extend beyond attendance at training to mentoring, peer learning, classroom application and review of whether practice is improving. This creates a clearer link between training investment, professional competence and learner progress.

e) Clear professional standards can provide a common reference for recruitment, induction, performance, continuing professional development, certification and career progression. The discussion also highlighted formal preparation and certification for specialized communication skills, including sign language, and the need to connect specialist programmes with actual service and employment needs.

Working Group 2: Inclusive and Future-Ready Special Education Service Delivery

Working Group 2 considered how Punjab's service-delivery system can respond to children with different disabilities, abilities, locations and support requirements. Its mandate was to define an inclusive and future-ready service model covering specialised and inclusive education, transition pathways, assistive and digital technologies, and the institutional capacity required to improve learning, participation and independence.

a) The group broadly converged on flexible, child-centered placement across mainstream, integrated and specialized settings. Placement should be guided by assessed need and available support, with opportunities for transition between settings. Participants also discussed a progressive zero-rejection direction for mainstream schools, supported by reasonable accommodation, assessment and referral rather than unsupported placement.

b) Special Education Institutes will continue to provide direct specialized education. They can also progressively serve as hubs of expertise for the wider education system. Functions may include assessment, referral, teacher guidance, curriculum adaptation, assistive technology and resource support. The dialogue also considered mobile or multidisciplinary teams serving clusters of schools rather than requiring a specialist resource centre in every mainstream school.





c) Assistive technology, digital learning and appropriate AI-enabled solutions were seen as part of a wider support package. Effective use requires assessment of learner need, accessible content, teacher and family orientation, maintenance, technical support, budget provision and safeguards. Participants stressed that digital solutions should complement human interaction and professional support.

d) Future service delivery requires trained mainstream and special educators working with multidisciplinary support. It also requires accessible and equitable facilities, psychosocial and health linkages, appropriate staffing, stronger early identification and data systems, and transition planning linked to higher education, skills, employment and entrepreneurship.

e) Participants proposed joint leadership by the Special Education and School Education Departments, supported by Higher Education, PECTAA, Health, Finance, Child Protection, Social Welfare, information technology, universities and other relevant institutions. Coordination should cover identification, assessment, referral, teacher support, professional development, accessible learning resources, data, family engagement and transitions between services.

Common Directions Emerging from the Working Groups

Although the two working groups addressed different parts of the reform agenda, their discussions were closely connected. Curriculum reform cannot be separated from teacher competence. Teacher competence cannot be sustained without professional preparation, practical experience and continuing support. Inclusive education cannot expand effectively without specialized expertise, reasonable accommodation and appropriate resources. None of these reforms can be sustained without clearer institutional responsibilities and coordination.

A further point of convergence was that reform should be judged by what changes for children. New curricula, training programmes, standards, technologies or coordination arrangements are means to an end. Their value lies in whether children with disabilities gain better access to education, participate more fully, learn and develop, remain in education and move successfully towards further education, skills, employment and adult life.

The working groups therefore helped convert the wider policy discussion into a more connected reform pathway. Their recommendations were brought back to the plenary for consolidation and provided substantive inputs to the Lahore Declaration, which set out the shared direction and priority commitments emerging from the dialogue.

AREAS OF CONSENSUS AND THE LAHORE DECLARATION

The working group discussions were followed by plenary consolidation and prioritization. Participants considered the proposed reforms against their potential benefit for learners, equity, available evidence, feasibility, institutional mandate, resource implications and urgency. Areas where there was broad agreement were brought together in the Lahore Declaration on Transforming Special Education in Punjab: From Access to Quality, Inclusion, Learning and Independence. The Declaration provides a shared direction for reform. It does not replace the detailed technical work that will be required in each area. Rather, it sets out the principles and priorities around which curriculum reform, teacher quality, inclusive and specialized service delivery, institutional coordination and implementation arrangements can now be developed.

The Lahore Commitment

At the centre of the Declaration is a commitment to shift the focus of the system:

> From access to access with quality; from curriculum coverage to meaningful learning; from teacher qualifications to professional competence; from physical accessibility to genuine participation; from separate service systems to a continuum of support; from fragmented institutional responsibilities to shared accountability; and from activities and inputs to measurable outcomes for children.

This commitment does not reduce the importance of access. Punjab still needs to reach children with disabilities who remain outside education. The Declaration adds a stronger focus on what happens after a child enters the education system: whether the child participates, learns, progresses, receives appropriate support and is prepared for further education, skills, employment and greater independence.

Eight Areas of Reform Commitment

The dialogue identified eight connected areas around which future reform should be organized.

1) **Curriculum and learning:** Curriculum should respond more directly to the learning, developmental, communication and functional needs of children with different disabilities. Appropriate academic expectations should be combined with communication, functional academics, life skills, social and emotional development, digital competence, vocational readiness and transition. Individualized Education Plans, differentiated instruction, accessible learning materials, assistive technology, flexible pacing and appropriate assessment should progressively become part of regular teaching and learning. Curriculum adaptation should enable meaningful participation and progress rather than simply reduce content.

2) **Teacher quality and professional development:** Teacher quality should be strengthened across the full professional pathway. This begins with relevant pre-service preparation and meaningful supervised teaching practice and continues through induction, mentoring, continuing professional development and career progression. Teacher preparation should reflect actual classroom requirements and the diversity of learners. Professional development should increasingly respond to identified competency gaps and be followed through into classroom practice. The measure of success should therefore move beyond the number of teachers trained towards improvement in teacher competence, practice and learner experience.

3) **Professional standards, certification and career pathways:** Clear professional standards should define the knowledge, competencies, ethical responsibilities and professional practices expected of special educators and relevant professionals. These standards can progressively inform recruitment, induction, professional development, performance assessment, specialist career pathways and certification. Where specialized competencies are required, these should be demonstrated and verified. A phased approach should be followed so that professional standards strengthen quality and career development rather than create additional administrative requirements.

4) **A continuum of specialized and inclusive services:** Punjab should progressively develop a service model that moves beyond a binary choice between special and mainstream education. Specialized institutions should continue to provide intensive support where this is required. At the same time, children who can participate and learn effectively in mainstream settings with appropriate support should increasingly have that opportunity. This requires stronger arrangements for early identification, assessment, reasonable accommodation, placement, referral and transition. Special Education Institutes can also progressively provide specialist expertise and outreach to mainstream schools. Expansion of inclusion should be matched with teacher readiness and appropriate support so that inclusion means participation and learning rather than placement alone.

5) **Shared institutional responsibility:** Transforming special education cannot be the responsibility of one department alone. Institutional responsibilities should be clarified and an effective mechanism established for coordination across Special Education, School Education, Higher Education, PECTAA, universities and other relevant institutions. Shared responsibility should extend from policy to implementation. Institutions should agree on priorities, respective roles, timelines and expected results. Existing systems should be used where possible to reduce fragmentation and avoid parallel initiatives.

6) **Technology, data and evidence:** Assistive technology, accessible digital learning and appropriate AI-enabled solutions should be used to improve communication, learning, participation and independence. Their introduction should be accompanied by accessible content, teacher and family orientation, technical support, affordability, maintenance and appropriate safeguards. Data systems also need to support better identification, planning, referral and transition. Monitoring should progressively move beyond counting inputs and activities towards understanding whether children are participating, learning, progressing, remaining in education and transitioning successfully.

7) **Equitable and sustainable financing:** Investment should increasingly respond to learner need, equity and expected educational impact. Resource allocation should recognize differences in disability and support needs, geography, poverty and gender. Financing also needs to extend beyond infrastructure. Sustainable reform requires investment in teachers, allied professionals, accessible learning materials, assistive technology, transport, digital support, specialist services and transition pathways. Resource decisions should therefore be connected with the educational results they are expected to achieve.

8) **Children and families at the centre:** Children with disabilities and their families should have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the design, monitoring and improvement of education and support services. Participation should be safe, accessible and appropriate to the age, ability and communication needs of the child. Families are important partners, particularly for early identification, continuity of support and transition. Their participation should complement rather than replace the voice, choices and evolving agency of the child or young person.

From Declaration to a Reform Framework

The Lahore Declaration provides direction. The next requirement is to translate this direction into a limited, sequenced and implementable reform framework. The framework should bring together four connected elements: agreed curriculum reform priorities and educator competencies; a Teacher Quality Reform Framework; a Future Special Education Service Delivery Roadmap; and clear implementation, coordination and monitoring arrangements. For each priority reform, the framework should identify the lead and supporting institutions, indicative timeframe, resource implications, expected result and measurable change for learners. An appropriate interdepartmental mechanism should periodically review progress, resolve coordination issues and ensure that commitments move from dialogue to implementation.

From Dialogue to Action

The Policy Dialogue established a shared direction for transforming special education in Punjab. The immediate task is to convert this direction into a manageable programme of reform. Not every proposal can be pursued at the same time. Priority should be given to reforms that have a clear benefit for children, promote equity and inclusion, are supported by evidence, fall within an identifiable institutional mandate, can be measured and are feasible to sustain. Implementation should also allow space for testing and learning before wider scale-up.

Three implementation streams emerge from the dialogue.

Curriculum, Teacher Quality and Professional Standards

The first stream should bring curriculum reform and teacher quality together. Early technical work should define priority curriculum pathways and learner competencies and develop a core competency framework for special educators. This work should strengthen Individualized Education Plans and learner-centered assessment and clarify how sign language, Braille, Universal Design for Learning, accessible materials, functional learning, assistive technology and vocational preparation will be incorporated. Teacher competencies should cover differentiated pedagogy, communication, assessment, behaviour support, assistive technology and relevant subject knowledge. These competencies should then provide a common reference for pre-service education, supervised practicum, induction, mentoring and continuing professional development. The Special Education Department, universities, teacher-education institutions, PECTAA and other relevant institutions should align their respective roles around the competency's teachers need in actual classrooms. A phased approach to professional standards and certification should also be developed. Where specialist competencies are required, mechanisms should be established to verify them.

Future Special Education Service Delivery Roadmap

The second stream should translate the proposed continuum of specialized, integrated and inclusive education into a practical service delivery roadmap. The roadmap should begin with improved identification and mapping of children with disabilities. It should define assessment and referral arrangements, review barriers to admission and participation, and identify where neighborhood mainstream schools can provide appropriate education with reasonable support. Clear pathways should remain available to specialized provision where needs are more intensive. The roadmap should also define the future role of Special Education Institutes. Alongside direct education services, selected institutes could progressively provide assessment, outreach, teacher support, curriculum adaptation, assistive technology and other specialist expertise to mainstream schools. Multidisciplinary support, accessible infrastructure, assistive and digital technology, data integration, family engagement and transition to higher education, skills and employment should form part of the same service pathway. Piloting should precede wider scale-up, allowing Punjab to test what works, what resources are required and what adjustments are needed.

Implementation, Coordination and Accountability

The Special Education Department should lead follow-up to the dialogue. The School Education Department should be a central partner for inclusive service delivery, while Higher Education, PECTAA, universities and other institutions should contribute according to their respective mandates. A time-bound interdepartmental mechanism should translate the Lahore Declaration into a single reform framework. Its purpose should be practical: to agree priorities, clarify responsibilities, address implementation constraints and review progress against agreed milestones. A concise implementation framework should accompany this process. For each priority action, it should identify the lead institution, supporting institutions, timeframe, resource requirements, expected result and indicator. This will provide the operational bridge between the Lahore Declaration and departmental planning, budgeting and implementation. This framework is indicative. Detailed responsibilities, costs, sequencing and indicators will require further technical work and formal agreement among the responsible institutions.

Indicative Implementation Framework

Priority action	Institutional responsibility	Timeframe	Implementation and expected outcome
Curriculum pathways and educator competency framework	Primary lead Special Education Department / PECTAA. Support: School Education, universities and teacher-education institutions	0–12 months	Establish a technical working group and undertake curriculum development and piloting. Agree a learner-responsive curriculum architecture and educator competency framework. Expected Outcome: Framework approved and initial pilots initiated.
Teacher Quality Reform Framework	Primary Lead: Special Education Department / Higher Education. Support: Universities, PECTAA and School Education	0–18 months	Provide for practicum, mentoring, CPD and professional standards development. Align pre-service preparation, practicum, CPD and standards with classroom competence. Expected Outcome: Framework adopted and initial practicum and CPD arrangements operational.
Inclusive Service Delivery Roadmap and pilots	Primary Lead: Special Education / School Education. Support: Health, PECTAA, universities and relevant local institutions	0–24 months	Provide assessment, accessibility, multidisciplinary and assistive support. Test pathways for identification, referral, placement, support and transition. Expected Outcome: Pilot areas operational with learner-level tracking.

MEASURING CHANGE FOR CHILDREN

Monitoring will need to track implementation, but it should not stop at activities and outputs. Numbers of teachers trained, curricula revised, technologies distributed and institutions engaged remain useful management information. They do not, however, show whether children's educational experiences are improving. Monitoring should progressively answer more important questions: Are more children participating? Are they learning and progressing? Are they remaining in education? Are they moving successfully between education settings and into further education, skills or employment? Are they becoming better prepared for greater independence?

Teacher reform should be assessed in the same way. Training completion is an input. The more important result is whether professional competence and classroom practice improve and whether those improvements contribute to better experiences and outcomes for learners. This results focus reflects the key message of the Lahore Declaration: reform should ultimately be judged by the difference it makes in children's lives.

A SEQUENCED APPROACH

Not all reforms can or should begin at the same time. Some require policy decisions. Others require technical development, institutional agreement, additional resources or piloting before wider implementation. The immediate priority should therefore be to convert the areas of consensus into a manageable sequence of actions. Early reforms should have clear institutional ownership and establish foundations for subsequent changes. Curriculum and competency development, for example, can provide a basis for teacher preparation, professional standards and continuing professional development. Sequencing also provides an opportunity to learn. New approaches can be tested, reviewed and adjusted before being expanded across Punjab. Evidence from implementation should inform subsequent decisions on scale, financing and institutional arrangements. In this way, the Policy Dialogue becomes the starting point for a reform process rather than an end in itself.

CONCLUSION

The Policy Dialogue brought together government institutions, universities, practitioners, technical experts, development partners, young people and persons with disabilities around a central question: how can Punjab translate its substantial special education platform into better learning, participation and life outcomes for children with disabilities?

The discussion reaffirmed the importance of access, while placing greater attention on quality and outcomes. Punjab needs to reach children who remain outside education. At the same time, it needs to improve the experience of children already enrolled. Access should therefore increasingly be considered alongside participation, learning, progression, wellbeing and transition. There was broad agreement that no single educational setting or curriculum pathway can respond appropriately to every learner. Punjab needs a continuum of specialized, integrated and inclusive provision. This requires stronger identification and assessment, reasonable accommodation, referral and transition, together with continued access to specialist expertise. Mainstream education should become a realistic option for more children where their needs can be appropriately supported, without weakening specialized provision for those requiring more intensive support.



The dialogue also showed that curriculum, teacher quality and service delivery need to move together. A learner-responsive curriculum requires competent teachers. Meaningful inclusion requires mainstream teacher preparation and specialist support. Technology requires accessible content and human guidance. Transition requires stronger connections with higher education, skills development and employment. These are connected system reforms rather than separate projects. The Lahore Declaration captures this shared direction. Its value will now depend on implementation. This means maintaining a limited number of priorities, assigning clear institutional leadership, sequencing reforms realistically, providing adequate resources and monitoring whether agreed actions are producing better results for children. The next phase will require sustained technical work and institutional leadership. It will also require continued engagement with children with disabilities and their families. Their experiences should remain an important measure of whether reform is working.

The Lahore Ambition

Every child with a disability in Punjab should have the opportunity to learn, participate, progress and prepare for a meaningful and increasingly independent future, with education and support appropriate to their individual needs.



ANNEX 1:

LAHORE DECLARATION ON TRANSFORMING SPECIAL EDUCATION IN PUNJAB:

FROM ACCESS TO QUALITY, INCLUSION, LEARNING AND INDEPENDENCE

Lahore, 3 September 2026

Preamble

We, the representatives of the Special Education Department, School Education Department, Higher Education Department, Planning and Development Board, PECTAA, universities and academic institutions, development partners, technical experts, practitioners, persons with disabilities, children and families, meeting in Lahore on 3 September 2026 at the Policy Dialogue on Transforming Special Education in Punjab, reaffirm our shared commitment to ensuring that every child with a disability has the opportunity to learn, participate, develop and progress with dignity.

We recognize education as a fundamental right. We reaffirm the commitments set out in Article 25-A of the Constitution of Pakistan, the Punjab Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act 2022, the Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act 2014, the Punjab Special Education Policy 2020 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We acknowledge the significant progress made by the Government of Punjab in expanding special education. The next phase must move beyond institutional expansion alone. It must focus on better teaching, meaningful learning, professional competence, appropriate inclusion, specialized support, transition and greater independence for children with disabilities.

We recognize that children with disabilities have different learning, communication, developmental and support needs. No single model can serve every child. Punjab therefore needs a continuum of specialized, integrated and inclusive education, so that each child can access the education and support most appropriate to their needs.

We also recognize that inclusion is more than physical access to a school. Meaningful inclusion requires capable teachers, appropriate and flexible curricula, accessible learning materials, specialist support, assistive technology and effective referral pathways. It also requires Special Education and mainstream education systems to work together, with clear and shared institutional responsibilities.

Accordingly, we adopt the Lahore Declaration on Transforming Special Education in Punjab as our shared direction for the next phase of reform.

Our Shared Vision

Every child with a disability in Punjab should have the opportunity to learn, participate, progress and prepare for a meaningful and increasingly independent future.

To advance this vision, we agree on the following commitments.

1) **Curriculum and Learning: Curriculum** should respond to the learning, functional, developmental and communication needs of children with disabilities. It should combine appropriate academic learning with communication, life and functional skills, digital competencies, vocational readiness and preparation for greater independence. Individualized education planning and learning, differentiated teaching, accessible materials, assistive technology and appropriate assessment should become part of classroom practice. Punjab will develop agreed curriculum reform priorities and a core competency framework for educators, linked to better teaching and learner outcomes.

2) **Teacher Quality and Professional Standards:** Better learning requires capable and supported teachers. Teacher development should cover pre-service education, supervised teaching practice, mentoring, continuing professional development and career progression. Special educators need strong specialist competencies. Mainstream teachers also need preparation in inclusive education including appropriate practicum, effectively identify, teach and support children with disabilities. Universities, training institutions and relevant government bodies should work together to align teacher preparation with classroom needs. Clear professional standards should guide teacher competencies, performance, professional development and certification, where appropriate. A Teacher Quality Reform Framework will be developed to strengthen teacher competence, classroom practice and learner outcomes.

3) **Specialized, Integrated and Inclusive Services:** Punjab will develop a continuum of specialized, integrated and inclusive services. Specialized institutions will remain essential for children requiring intensive support. Children who can learn effectively in mainstream schools with appropriate support should have that opportunity. Special Education Institutes should also progressively provide expertise to the wider education system through assessment, referral, teacher guidance, assistive technology and resource support. A Future Special Education Service Delivery Roadmap will define clear pathways for identification, assessment, referral, specialized support, inclusion and transition.

4) **Reaching the Unreached through Digital and AI-Enabled Learning:** Digital learning, assistive technology and responsible AI-enabled approaches should help reach children who remain unreached or cannot regularly access appropriate education and specialist support. Technology should provide accessible and alternative ways of teaching and learning for different disabilities and learning needs. It should complement teachers, extend learning beyond institutions and bring support closer to children and families. Punjab will identify and pilot accessible, affordable and scalable digital and AI-enabled learning approaches, guided by evidence of what works for children.

5) **Shared Responsibility and Sustainable Reform:** Transforming special and inclusive education is a shared responsibility. Special Education, School Education, Higher Education, PECTAA, Punjab Education Foundation, universities, health and social-sector institutions, Planning and Development and other relevant bodies all have complementary roles. Institutional responsibilities will be clearly defined, with stronger interdepartmental coordination and shared accountability for results. Children with disabilities and their families must remain at the centre of these reforms, with meaningful opportunities to contribute to their design, implementation and monitoring. Reform also requires adequate and sustainable financing. Investment should be guided by need, equity and educational impact, with resources directed to teachers, specialist support, accessible learning materials, assistive technology, transport and transition to further education, skills and work.

From Declaration to Action

This Declaration will be translated into **curriculum reform priorities and educator competencies; a Teacher Quality Reform Framework; a Future Special Education Service Delivery Roadmap; and agreed arrangements for implementation and monitoring.**

For each priority reform, we will agree **what will be done, who will lead, by when, and what measurable difference it should make for children.**

Lahore Commitment

Together, we will move:

- **from access to quality learning;**
- **from teacher qualifications to professional competence;**
- **from physical access to meaningful participation;**
- **from isolated services to a continuum of support;**
- **from institutional boundaries to shared responsibility; and**
- **from activities to measurable outcomes for children.**

Adopted in Lahore, Punjab

3 September 2026

ANNEX 2:

DETAILED POLICY DIALOGUE AGENDA

Time	Session	Purpose / expected output	Speaker
09:00-09:30	Registration and Networking Tea	Participant arrival, registration, seating and distribution of the agenda, background note and working-group template.	Special Education Team
09:30-09:35	National Anthem and Talawat	Led by the children.	Special Education Team
09:35-09:50	Opening and Policy Framing	Welcome by the Special Education Department and presentation.	Mr Shoeb Iqbal Syed, Secretary, Special Education Department
09:50-09:55	Scene Setting Documentary	Documentary highlighting the current context and future vision for special education in Punjab.	Moderator
09:55-10:05	Opening Remarks	UNICEF perspective on strengthening quality and inclusive special education and the importance of curriculum and teacher capacity.	Mr Ramiz Bahbudov, Chief Field Office, UNICEF Pakistan
10:05-10:20	Institutional Capacity Assessment	Key findings and recommendations on curriculum, teacher capacity, institutional readiness and inclusive service delivery.	Mr Niaz Ullah Khan, AWF/LUMS Team
10:20-10:40	From System Reforms to Better Learning Outcomes	Current curriculum, inclusive education, teacher preparation and classroom practices, including key gaps and reform priorities.	Special Education Department
10:40-11:00	Journey through System	Two success stories - voices of students.	Students from Special Education Institutes
11:00-12:15	Panel Discussion	Priority reforms in curriculum and inclusive education, teacher preparation and professional development, professional standards, service delivery, and assistive and digital technologies.	Moderated by Mr Niaz Ullah Khan, Technical Lead
12:15-12:30	Short Break and Transition	Refreshment break and movement to assigned working-group tables.	
12:30-12:40	Working-Group Briefing	Two mandates, common reform matrix, prioritization criteria and reporting format. Each recommendation to state classroom/service change, learner benefit and measurement.	Mr Niaz Ullah Khan and Special Education Department Team
12:40-13:30	Concurrent Working Groups	Group 1: Curriculum Reform, Teacher Professional Development and Professional Standards. Group 2: Inclusive Education and Future-Ready Special Education Service Delivery.	Special Education Department Team lead by Dr. Khaula Munawar Minhas and Dr. Uzma Rafique
13:30-13:40	Plenary Consolidation and Prioritization	Consolidate overlapping proposals and prioritize against learner impact, equity, evidence, feasibility, institutional	Moderator and Mr Niaz Ullah Khan

Time	Session	Purpose / expected output	Speaker
		mandate, resource implications and urgency.	
13:40-13:50	Way Forward and Joint Policy Communiqué-Lahore Declaration	Agreed Joint Policy Communiqué and implementation mechanism.	Mr Shoeb Iqbal Syed, Secretary, Special Education Department
13:50-13:55	Closing Remarks	Final remarks	Mr Ramiz Bahbudov, Chief Field Office, UNICEF Pakistan
13:55-14:00	Vote of Thanks	Formal Closure of the event	Lt. Muhammad Shoaib Khan Jadoon- Director General Special Education Punjab

ANNEX 3:

PANEL DISCUSSION:

TOPICS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Topic	Key question	Panellist / perspective
Putting Children with Disabilities and Families at the Centre of Reform	How can the voices and lived experiences of children with disabilities and their families systematically influence policy design, service delivery and accountability?	Ms Taqwa Ahmed, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador
Universities as key stakeholders for Special Education Research	How universities can support research agenda for special education key reforms especially by creating linkages and establishing Centre of excellence.	Dr Muhmmad Ali Shah, Vice Chancellor, University of Punjab, Lahore
Preparing and Supporting Quality Teachers	How should pre-service preparation, supervised teaching practice, mentoring and continuing professional development be strengthened so that teachers are classroom-ready for diverse learning and support needs?	Dr Aqif Anwar Ch., Vice Chancellor, University of Education, Lahore
Professional Standards, Performance and Career Pathways	What professional standards, performance expectations and career pathways are needed to strengthen teacher quality, professional growth and accountability?	Dr Sajjad Mobin, Vice Chancellor, University of Okara
Making Reform Happen: Institutional Coordination, Capacity and Accountability	What institutional roles, coordination mechanisms, capacities and accountability arrangements are needed to translate the proposed reforms from policy into classrooms and services at scale?	Mr Ghulam Farid, Secretary, Higher Education Department
Building the Right Continuum of Inclusive and Specialized Education	How should Punjab balance specialized, integrated and inclusive education to meet the different needs of children with disabilities and resource allocations?	Secretary, School Education Department
Future-Ready Curriculum, Learning Outcomes and Teacher Competencies	What competencies do special educators need, and what priority curriculum reforms are required to respond to diverse learning needs and improve measurable learner outcomes?	Mr Musa Ali Bukhari, CEO PECTAA, School Education Department Punjab
Assistive Technology, Digital Learning and AI for Inclusion	How can assistive technology, digital learning and appropriate AI-enabled solutions improve learning, communication, participation and independence, and what is required to take these solutions to scale?	Mr Umair Babar Chishti, Global Director of Partnerships, Noon EdTech

ANNEX 4:

WORKING GROUP FRAMEWORK AND PRIORITISATION CRITERIA

Working Group 1: Curriculum Reform, Teacher Professional Development and Professional Standards

Focus: Develop an integrated teacher-quality framework that aligns curriculum, teacher competencies, pre-service preparation, supervised teaching practice, continuing professional development and professional standards. The group considers how universities, training institutions, the Special Education Department, HEC and relevant authorities can jointly ensure that educators are classroom-ready and able to improve learning, participation, communication, functional skills and transition outcomes.

- What key competencies should special educators have, and what changes are needed in the curriculum to strengthen inclusive teaching, assessment, classroom management and the use of assistive and digital technologies?
- How should teacher preparation and professional development be improved, including teaching practice, internships, mentoring and continuing professional development?
- What professional standards should guide teacher recruitment, certification, career progression and professional development, and how should relevant institutions coordinate these reforms?
- How should these reforms be implemented and monitored to show improvements in teaching quality, classroom practice and learner outcomes?

Required output: A Teacher Quality Reform Framework covering key teacher competencies and curriculum changes; teacher preparation and professional development, including teaching practice and CPD; professional standards and institutional roles, including certification where relevant; and up to four priority actions identifying responsibility, timeframe and expected improvements in teaching and learner outcomes.

Working Group 2: Inclusive and Future-Ready Special Education Service Delivery

Focus: Define an inclusive and future-ready special education service model that responds to the different needs of children with disabilities. The group considers inclusive and specialized education, transition pathways, assistive and digital technologies, and the institutional capacity needed to improve learning, participation and independence.

- What mixes of specialized, integrated and inclusive education models is most appropriate for children with different disabilities and support needs in Punjab?
- How can inclusive education and transition pathways be strengthened while ensuring access to specialized support and continuity of services?
- How can assistive technologies, digital learning and appropriate AI-enabled solutions improve learning, participation and independence of children with disabilities?
- What institutional, human-resource and infrastructure improvements are needed to implement and monitor an inclusive and future-ready special education system?

Required output: A Future Special Education Service Delivery Roadmap covering priority approaches for inclusive, specialized and transition services; priority use of assistive technology and digital learning; key institutional, human-resource and infrastructure improvements; and up to four priority actions identifying responsibility, timeframe and expected improvements for children with disabilities.

ANNEX 5:

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS- POLICY DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

Sr.	Name	Designation	Department
1.	Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah	Vice Chancellor	University of the Punjab, Lahore
2.	Dr. Aqif Anwar Chaudhry	Vice Chancellor	University of Education, Lahore
3.	Dr. Sajjad Mobin	Vice Chancellor	University of Okara
4.	Shoaib Iqbal Syed	Secretary	Punjab Special Education Department
5.	Mudassir Riaz Malik	Secretary	Punjab School Education Department
6.	Ghulam Farid	Secretary	Punjab Higher Education Department
7.	Lt. (Retd.) Muhammad Shoaib Khan Jadoon	Director General	Punjab Special Education Department
8.	Ramiz Behbudov	Chief Field Officer	UNICEF Punjab Lahore
9.	Hafiz Irfan	Additional Secretary (Reform)	Punjab School Education Department
10.	Manzur Ahmed Siddique	Deputy Secretary	Punjab Special Education Department
11.	Zahid Majeed	Director (P&D)	Punjab Special Education Department
12.	Masroor Naqvi	Director (Admin)	Punjab School Education Department
13.	Abdul Sttar	Director (Academics)	Punjab Special Education Department
14.	Dr. Khurram Shahzad	Chief Executive Officer	Nawaz Sharif Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Education
15.	Sana Zulqarnain	Director	Nawaz Sharif Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Education
16.	Dr. Zahid Majeed	Director	Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad
17.	Dr. Khaula Munawar Minhas	Deputy Director Curriculum	Punjab Special Education Department
18.	Anbreen Aslam	Deputy Director (Monitoring)	Punjab Special Education Department
19.	Hanzla Ashfaq	Deputy Director (Development)	Punjab Special Education Department
20.	Dr. Uzma Rafique	Deputy Director (Inclusive Education)	Punjab Special Education Department
21.	Sadaf Ashraf	Assistant Director (Education)	Punjab Special Education Department
22.	Jamshed Bashir	Assistant Director (Inclusive Education)	Punjab Special Education Department
23.	Syeda Nabiha Zia	Assistant Director (PSY)	Punjab Special Education Department
24.	Aqsa Abdul Ghafoor	Assistant Director (Development)	Punjab Special Education Department
25.	Saima Iqbal	Assistant Director (Examination)	Punjab Special Education Department

26.	Shahid Nisar	Section Officer (EII)	Punjab Special Education Department
27.	M. Zubair	Section Officer (B&D)	Punjab Special Education Department
28.	Shahid Rafiq	Section Officer (EI)	Punjab Special Education Department
29.	Raza Iqbal	Section Officer (Gn.)	Punjab School Education Department
30.	Azmat Tahira	Section Officer (SE)	Punjab School Education Department
31.	Kaswar Abbas	Programme Officer	Punjab Special Education Department
32.	Muhammad Mudassar	Statistical Officer	Punjab Special Education Department
33.	Abu Bakar Aslam	Law Officer	Punjab Special Education Department
34.	Muhamad Haroon	Personal Secretary	Punjab School Education Department
35.	Dr. Abdul Hameed	Managing Director	Centre for Inclusive Education and Research, Lahore
36.	Dr. Laila Mohsin Adeel	Chief Executive Officer	Institute of Social Empowerment and Development
37.	Nabila Chaudry	Chief Executive Officer	Rising Sun Institute, Lahore
38.	Dr. Tipu Sultan	Pediatric Neurologist	Children Hospital Lahore
39.	Dr. Humera Khuwaja	M.B.B.S (ENT Specialist) / Autism Expert	TEACCH Programme Trainer
40.	Dr. Atia Ur Rehman	Director	Rashid Latif Khan University
41.	Dr. Aoun Raza	Assistant chief (Special Education)	Planning and Development Board
42.	Dr. Saima Malik	Assistant Chief (Education)	Planning and Development Board
43.	Zahida Batool	Additional Director General	Punjab Skill Development Authority (PSDA)
44.	Aamad Ali Yousafzai	Inclusive Edu Expert	Freelance Consultant
45.	Aamna Aamad	Textbook Author/Consultant /External Reviewer	FCDO/PECTAA
46.	Abdul Aleem Najam	Research & Enforcement Officer	Home Department
47.	Naveed Ahmed	Director	Ghazali Education Foundation
48.	Umair Babar	Director	Noor Academy
49.	Muhammad Asif	Director	Punjab Higher Education Commission
50.	Hamna Malik	Communication Lead	Punjab School Education Department
51.	Tauseef Sardar	Regional Manager	Helping Hand
52.	Binyamin Hussain	Social Media Consultant	Punjab Special Education Department
53.	Niaz Ullah Khan	Chief Executive Officer	AWF Pvt Ltd
54.	M. Sajid Zaman	Chief Operating Officer	AWF Pvt Ltd
55.	Rubina Nadeem	Education Specialist	UNICEF
56.	Sehr Raza Jafri,	Education Specialist	UNICEF Punjab
57.	Kamran Iftikhar Lone	Education Manager	UNICEF Punjab

58.	Hiba Ali	Communication Specialist	UNICEF
59.	Taqwa Ahmad	Youth Advocate	UNICEF
60.	Dr. Abdul Rehan Cheema	Social Policy Specialist	UNICEF
61.	Umair Arshad	Consultant	UNICEF
62.	Dr. Hina Fazil	Associate Professor	Punjab Special Education Department University of Punjab
63.	Dr. Samina	Associate Professor	Punjab Special Education Department
64.	Dr. Ayesha Khalid	Assistant Professor	University Home Economics Lahore
65.	Dr. Zahida	Chairperson Special Education	University of Education, Lahore
66.	Dr. Amna Arif	Associate Professor	University of Management and Technology
67.	Dr. Asmaa Azeem	Associate Professor	University of Management and Technology
68.	Dr. Shaheen Pasha	Consultant	University of Education, Lahore
69.	Andleeb	Lecturer	University Home Economics Lahore
70.	Dr. Syeda Beenish	Lecturer	University of Education, Lahore
71.	Dr. Sidra Ansar	Lecturer	University of Okara
72.	Ghulam Murtaza	Principal	Govt. In-Service Training College for the Teachers of Disabled Children, Lahore, Punjab Special Education Department
73.	Rehman Afzal Khan	Principal	Govt. Degree College of Special Education Sargodha
74.	Rashida Majeed	Principal	Govt. Degree College of Special Education Lahore
75.	Mah Jabeen	Principal	Govt. Higher Secondary School for Hearing Impairment, Okara
76.	Zarina Wahid	Principal	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impairment (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
77.	Dr. Sobia Asif	Principal	Government Special Education Centre, Nishtar Town, Lahore
78.	Saima Akbar	Headmistress	Govt Institute for slow learners, Lahore
79.	Asma Naheed	Principal	Maryam Nawaz School and Resource Centre for Autism, Lahore
80.	Sadaf Aziz	Vice Principal	Maryam Nawaz School and Resource Centre for Autism, Lahore
81.	Maryam Kamran	Vice Principal	Maryam Nawaz School and Resource Centre for Autism, Lahore
82.	Dr. Tayyaba Naz	Senior Special Education Teacher	Govt Degree College for Special Education Lahore
83.	Fareeha Shabbir	Senior Special Education Teacher	Govt Higher Secondary School for Hearing Impairment, Okara
84.	Dr. Muhammad Saeed	Senior Teacher	National Special Education Centre, Johar Town, Lahore

85.	Dr. Abdul Basit Rana	Senior Teacher	National Special Education Centre, Johar Town, Lahore
86.	Dr. Fayaz Hussain	Senior Special Education Teacher	Govt. Secondary School of Special Education for Blinds (Boys), Sheranwala Gate, Lahore
87.	Sidra Asghar	Junior Special Education Teacher	Govt Central High School for H.I. (Girls), Gulberg
88.	Kanza Iftikhar	Senior Special Education Teacher	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impairment (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
89.	Musarrat	Senior Special Education Teacher	Punjab Special Education Department
90.	Adnan Bashir	Senior Special Education Teacher	Punjab Special Education Department
91.	Majida Bibi	Senior Special Education Teacher	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impairment (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
92.	Humaira Asad	Senior Special Education Teacher	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impairment (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
93.	Abdullah Iqbal	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impairment (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
94.	Ali Murtaza	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impairment (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
95.	Amina Amjad	Student	Govt Central High School for H.I. (Girls) Gulberg, Lahore
96.	Hafza Aftab	Student	Govt Central High School
97.	Ali Hassan	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
98.	M. Zain	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
99.	M. Saad	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
100.	Arman	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
101.	Bilal	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
102.	Tayyab	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
103.	Irfan	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Boys) Gulberg, Lahore
104.	Bisma	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Girls) Gulberg, Lahore
105.	Sana	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Girls) Gulberg, Lahore
106.	Humaira	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Girls) Gulberg, Lahore
107.	Fajar	Student	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Girls) Gulberg, Lahore

108.	Saima Saleh	Junior Clerk	Punjab Special Education Department
109.	Michael	Attendant	Punjab School Education Department
110.	Usman Ali	Attendant	Govt Special Education School for Hearing Impaired (Girls) Gulberg, Lahore
111.	Samana Yousaf	Mother of Child with SEND	Mianwali College
112.	Uzair Saleem	Software Engineer	Punjab Special Education Department
113.	Usman Ali	Drone Operator	Punjab School Education Department