

Aawaz II

Inclusion, Accountability, Reducing Exploitation

Scaling Youth Engagement in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:

Learning from the Aawaz II
Community Model

Policy Brief

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Disclaimer

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Acronyms

AAC	Aawaz Aagahi Centre
ACA	Aawaz Change Agent
ADP	Annual Development Plan
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
GBV	Gender-based Violence
LG	Local Government
MPDD	Management and Professional Development Department
NIM	National Institute of Management
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
SAP	Social Action Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SROI	Social Return on Investment
UC	Union Council

Tapping the Youth Potential

Converting Challenge into Opportunity

Highlights

According to the Labour Force Survey, 37% of Pakistan's youth aged 15-29 is Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). Without structured civic and institutional pathways, the demographic dividend, the economic and social benefits that can result from a large youth population, is at risk.

A Proven Model: Ready for Scale

Aawaz II youth volunteers, inclusive community forums and safe civic spaces in 37 districts across Punjab and KP, with representation of vulnerable groups such as women, transgender persons, religious minorities and persons with disabilities. Volunteers address exclusion, child marriage, gender-based violence and intolerance, creating awareness, facilitating access to information and services and engaging with government services.

The Economic Case for Integration.

Social Return on Investment: 4.5:1 to 6:1

- Volunteer workforce equivalent to 500 full-time staff
- 30-40% reduction in district administrative burden
- PKR 2-3 billion projected social cost savings

Accelerating National Priorities

Scaling youth engagement strengthens SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)

Low-Cost, High-Impact Integration Pathway

A phased roadmap embeds the model within existing Local Government, Youth Affairs, Education, P&D, and MPDD systems, without creating parallel structures.

1. The Untapped Potential: Pakistan's Youth Challenge and Opportunity

Pakistan stands at a critical juncture. The nation is home to the largest youth cohort in its history, as 26% of the population is between 15-29 years of age (males being 12.7% and females being 13.2%)¹. Harnessing their energy, creativity, and diversity can accelerate progress on education, innovation, and inclusive governance. Global evidence demonstrates that investing in youth empowerment is not a cost but a high-yield investment, capable of generating a Social Return on Investment (SROI) of up to 7:1.^{2,3,4} Quantitative metrics such as SROI can be useful for comparing the operational efficiency and outcomes of different projects and social enterprises.⁵

When youth, especially girls, minorities, and marginalised groups, are included in decision-making, societies benefit through stronger social cohesion, reduced harmful practices, and improved economic outcomes. Aawaz II demonstrates how this potential can be realised: by creating safe spaces for dialogue, engaging youth as change agents, and empowering them to address discriminatory social norms and harmful practices that inhibit young women and men from achieving their full potential in a safe environment. Such practices include child marriage, gender-based violence (GBV), and intolerance.

1 Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Population and Housing Census. Islamabad: PBS, 2023.

2 International Youth Foundation, A Social Return on Investment (SROI) Study: Passport to Success. Washington, DC: George Washington University, 2022.

3 Nieto, I., Domínguez, M. A., González, S. A., Mayo, X., and Jiménez, A., 'A pilot implementation of the SROI model to physical activity, sports and recreation programs in Bogota', International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 17/4 (2025), pp. 1-15.

4 Barrow, Katherine, et al. Social Return on Investment as a Tool for Impact Evaluation and Funding Decisions. Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University, 2024. https://bush.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Brown_Final-Report-Disability-Team-Rough-Draft_24-25.pdf.

5 United Nations, World Youth Report 2020 (New York: United Nations, 2020), ISBN 978-92-1-130406-0.

2.A Window for Policy Action

The reality for the majority of 44 million youth living in Punjab and KP1 is a crisis of exclusion. Young people, especially the marginalised, have limited access to education, jobs, and decision-making.

While Pakistan's youth bulge is often framed in demographic terms, evidence shows that youth become a development asset only when young people are treated as political actors with credible pathways to participation. More fundamentally, youth exclusion is not only a governance challenge but also a development constraint. Harmful social norms, gender inequality, child marriage, gender-based violence, and social exclusion limit young people's ability to participate in education, employment, and public life. As a result, investments in skills development and economic empowerment often fail to achieve their full potential because the social barriers that restrict participation remain unaddressed. Without access to decision-making and power, large youth cohorts risk deepening exclusion rather than delivering a demographic dividend. The World Bank (2018) similarly finds that youth inclusion depends not on isolated initiatives, but on institutional pathways that connect skills, participation, and voice, particularly for marginalised and out-of-school youth.^{6,7}

Even fewer young people, especially women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), religious minorities and transgender persons, can overcome the social and systemic barriers that limit their access. Few institutional channels exist to link youth voices to formal policymaking or local service delivery. The lack of constructive channels fuels disillusionment with formal processes, making youth vulnerable to radical narratives and risks deepening social fragmentation.^{8,9} This challenge can be overcome by adopting a comprehensive youth

6 Ntarangwi, M., 'Review of Honwana, Alcinda, The Time of Youth', Journal of Retracing Africa, 3/1 (2014).

7 World Bank, Pathways to Youth Inclusion (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2024), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099120224164032400/pdf/P1775501b437210b1192fa1a44228402297.pdf>

8 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan. National Human Development Report 2017. Islamabad: UNDP, 2017.

9 British Council. Pakistan: The Next Generation Report. London: British Council, 2023.

policy that goes beyond sports and microcredit and complements economic initiatives with social empowerment. One such opportunity is to empower youth as agents of social change, addressing the barriers of discriminatory norms and harmful practices that limit their participation and leadership potential.

This policy brief examines one such model of youth-led change and engagement, the Aawaz II programme, and provides recommendations for scaling up by the government and development programmes. This model has operational safeguards that ensure that inclusion moves beyond intent to measurable outcomes. The programme's intersectional framework mandates specific inclusion quotas, ensuring that 50% of participants are women and that representation is reserved for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and religious minorities. Therefore, scaling such models can turn Pakistan's youth from passive recipients into active partners in shaping a more inclusive and prosperous future.

Policy uptake depends on moving beyond treating 'youth' as a homogeneous subject. Consequently, this brief recognises three distinct constituencies, each governable through specific institutional levers: youth in education or training (ages 15-24); those employed or actively seeking employment; and individuals not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Used to track youth aged 15-24 under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), the NEET indicator encompasses nearly 37% of the 58.6 million youth cohort aged 15-29.

2.1 An Opportunity for Change

Pakistan's youth policies and initiatives, at both provincial and federal levels, recognise the importance of engaging young people in development. Existing mechanisms include:

- Punjab and KP Youth Policies: Emphasise education, employment, and civic engagement.
- KP Youth Employment Program: Focuses on skills training and entrepreneurship.

- National Youth Council: Provides advisory input at the federal level.
- HEC's Youth Development Centres: Located in leading public sector universities for career counselling.

While these goals are shared, Punjab and KP differ significantly in governance structures and implementation landscapes. Punjab's youth policy emphasises education and entrepreneurship but relies heavily on centralised implementation through provincial departments, leveraging a robust institutional infrastructure.¹⁰ KP, by contrast, has a stronger tradition of community engagement and local government integration, reflected in its partnerships with district-level bodies and a focus on digital ecosystems¹¹.

Despite the efforts of governments, the success of economic and skills-focused policies is often undermined by deep-rooted social barriers. Evidence confirms that harmful practices, specifically gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage, exclusion and intolerance, act as structural constraints on development.^{12,13} These dynamics are most visible in the high share of youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), which stands at approximately 37% overall (Punjab: 34%; KP: 43%).¹⁴ When restrictive social norms constrain girls' safe mobility or channel boys away from constructive civic engagement, the returns on public investments in education and skills are systematically undermined. Human capital cannot translate into productive participation where agency, safety, and social legitimacy are absent. Addressing these normative barriers is therefore not solely a matter of rights protection; it is a structural economic necessity.

10 Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI), 'Punjab Allocates Rs. 26 Billion for Youth Skills and Entrepreneurship in 2025-26', LCCI, 15 July 2025, lcci.pk/punjab-allocates-rs-26-billion-for-youth-skills-and-entrepreneurship-in-2025-26/

11 Welcome | Youth Employment Program <https://kpyep.kpitb.gov.pk/>

12 Challenge of Child Marriage | World Bank Gender Data Portal <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/data-stories/child-marriage>

13 Child Marriage Country Profile - Pakistan | UNICEF Pakistan <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/documents/child-marriage-country-profile-pakistan>

14 Labour Force Survey 2020-21, and neet-rates-at-province-and-division-level.pdf <https://gallup.com.pk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/neet-rates-at-province-and-division-level.pdf>

2.1.1 Implications for Integration: A Tailored Approach

While these initiatives establish a well-intentioned and strong foundation for youth engagement, addressing some aspects of education, employment, and civic engagement, their full potential can be realised by embedding complementary approaches that address the discriminatory gendered norms and practices that limit the impact of these policies. Integration of Aawaz II complements these efforts by bridging these gaps through grassroots mechanisms. However, given the provincial differences and norm-driven constraints, the integration must be tailored: leveraging departmental scale in Punjab and aligning with local governance structures in KP. Integrating this model can support policy objectives more effectively by:

- Using community forums to extend the grassroots reach of government initiatives to marginalised youth and minorities who are often invisible to centralised systems.
- Integrating critical norm-change content (prevention of GBV, child marriage) directly into existing economic and skills development programmes to reduce NEET risks.
- Providing the government with a structured framework to empower youth as leaders of social behaviour change, moving beyond ad-hoc volunteering.
- Creating community-driven platforms that sustain dialogue between youth and the state, ensuring policies remain responsive to local needs.
- Embedding clear inclusion criteria for youth forums, ensuring representation of women, religious minorities, persons with disabilities, and transgender youth.

Building on this foundation, the following section introduces the Aawaz II model, a community-driven approach that operationalises these principles and demonstrates how youth can become catalysts for social change at scale.

3. The Aawaz II Youth Engagement Model

Aawaz II, a British Council-led initiative active in 37 districts of Punjab and KP, works to promote inclusion and reduce harmful practices like intolerance, social exclusion, child marriage and GBV.

The Aawaz II model operates as an integrated ecosystem in which Aawaz volunteers, community forums (Village and District Forums) and youth trained as Aawaz Change Agents, and Aawaz Aagahi Centres work together to deliver measurable outcomes. The volunteers and youth act as peer influencers; the Aagahi Centres provide safe spaces for citizens with verified information and referrals to services; and the Village and District Forums institutionalise dialogue between communities, youth and local authorities, improving responsiveness and trust. The effectiveness of this model is not accidental. Its design reflects well-established principles from behavioural science and collective action theory that explain how individual behaviour change can translate into broader community-level transformation. This inclusive, gender-sensitive model delivered verifiable results because its design is grounded in behavioural science, building human and social capital to generate a momentum of community-supported positive change. The verified information counters confirmation bias (the tendency to interpret information in ways that confirm existing beliefs), demonstrates new social norms (the unwritten rules and shared expectations within a group that shape what is considered appropriate behaviour), and influences conditional cooperators (individuals who are more likely to cooperate or adopt new behaviours when they observe others in their community doing the same). Moreover, the programme is cost-effective and aligned with global best practices. This theory of change is visualised in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Aawaz II Model of Engaging Youth for Social Change



3.1 Why Government Integration of Aawaz II Youth Model is Needed

Existing policies and programmes in Punjab and KP provide a strong foundation for empowering youth through education, employment and civic engagement. However, the evidence shows that with limited grassroots mechanisms, and social practices that constrain participation in civic life, youth, especially women and the marginalised, still face challenges of livelihood, education, unemployment, gender-based violence and child marriage.

Only 4.4% of individuals responding to the Aawaz II community survey (2024) believe government takes strong action in cases of GBV, and 51.7% reported 'nothing' done by departments.

The full potential of ongoing youth policies can be unlocked by complementing the efforts of government initiatives with community-level mechanisms that ensure inclusion and sustained engagement. The Aawaz II model provides an important layer of social infrastructure that can complement existing government efforts by helping bridge implementation gaps and supporting the translation of policy objectives into tangible community-level outcome. The integration of Aawaz II offers three key advantages:

- **Strengthens Existing Policies:** Embedding Aawaz II's proven village and district forums, and volunteer networks into provincial systems will operationalise policy objectives and accelerate progress on SDGs 5, 10, and 16.
- **Extends Reach:** Aawaz II grassroots platforms connect government initiatives to marginalised youth and minorities, ensuring no one is left behind.
- **Builds Trust and Responsiveness:** Community-driven dialogue channels foster collaboration between youth and local authorities, reducing disillusionment and strengthening the state-citizen relationship.

Rather than replacing existing programmes, integration enhances and amplifies their impact, creating a coherent, evidence-based approach to youth inclusion and social norm change. The table below presents the strategic case of integrating Aawaz II:

Table 1: The Strategic Case for Integration

Impact Area	Gains from Integrating (The 'Youth Asset')	Risks of Inaction (The 'Youth Deficit')
Youth Leadership	Partners in Development Transforms youth from passive beneficiaries of schemes into active community leaders (ACAs) who co-manage local development and dispute resolution.	Continued Tokenism: Youth engagement remains limited to symbolic advisory roles, fuelling intolerance and vulnerability to radical Narratives. ¹⁵
Inclusive Access	Reaches the Unreached: Uses Aawaz II network to extend government youth services to marginalised rural youth, women, and minorities who are currently invisible to the system.	Exclusion of the Vulnerable: Government resources remain concentrated in urban centres; rural and minority youth remain disconnected ¹⁶ .
Behaviour Change & Social Norms	Peer Pressure and Influence for Change: Leverages trained youth to exert positive social pressure within their peer groups and families, effectively shifting norms on child marriage, exclusion, intolerance and GBV.	Limitations of Top-Down Enforcement: Legal prohibitions alone are often insufficient to change deeply ingrained behaviours around harmful practices ¹⁷ .

¹⁵ United Nations. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes. New York: United Nations, 2023.

¹⁶ KAP Baseline Survey shows that awareness of laws protecting women is 10% in rural areas (vs 16% in urban), but drops to just 10% in rural areas, 93% of rural respondents are unaware of child protection services (compared to 87% in urban areas) and 42% of non-Muslim respondents believe government agencies do "very little or nothing" to address violence against them.

¹⁷ World Bank. World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behaviour. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015.

Impact Area	Gains from Integrating (The 'Youth Asset')	Risks of Inaction (The 'Youth Deficit')
Trust & Stability	Bridges Youth-State Trust Deficit: Creates a channel for youth potential through Social Action Projects (SAPs) to contribute to positive change, which is visible and recognised by the community and state.	Deepening Alienation: The absence of constructive civic avenues fuels alienation among youth and increases the risk of social instability. ¹⁸
Economic Impact	Economic Empowerment: Builds skills required for employment and leadership by giving planning and implementation experience.	Missed Demographic Dividend: Youth potential remains underutilised.

¹⁸ UNICEF. Empowering Adolescents and Youth in Pakistan as Partners in Innovation for Development. New York: UNICEF, 2021.

4. Expected Impacts

This section forecasts the impact and presents the cost-benefit analysis of integrating the Aawaz II model using an incremental strategy over a 5-year horizon.

Methodology Note:

The projection relies on four core valuation assumptions:

(i) Cost Avoidance - reductions in GBV and child marriage lower the fiscal burden on state health and judicial systems and increases labour force participation, (ii) Volunteer Labour Value: the Aawaz volunteers are valued using the 'Replacement Cost Method', (iii) Productivity Gains: youth who are engaged in civic platforms have higher employability and lifetime earnings, and (iv) Behavioural Impact: Social norm change accelerates when peer-led interventions reach critical mass¹⁹

These projections use the Aawaz II baseline data and apply global impact multipliers from similar youth engagement interventions (e.g., United Nations (UN) Youth 2030, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Youth Engagement Strategy, World Bank Social Return on Investment (SROI) and Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG) simulation models). The following projections are indicative estimates based on international evidence and comparable youth engagement initiatives. They should be interpreted as potential outcomes under successful implementation rather than as predicted results.

- 30-40% reduction in administrative load for District Youth and Social Welfare Officers.²⁰
- 25-30% increase in youth participation in local governance forums, leading to a significant increase in youth trust in local government.²¹

¹⁹ World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behaviour).

²⁰ Emerging Leaders Foundation-Africa (ELF-Africa), Effectiveness of Youth-led Social Accountability: The Case of Tunaweza Project (ELF-Africa 2023) 10, <https://elfafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Tunaweza-Research-Report-on-Effectiveness-of-Youth-Led-Social-Accountability.pdf>, accessed 6 June 2026

²¹ UN Youth2030 Strategy notes that formalising youth participation in local government is the most effective intervention for restoring trust in public institutions.

- Zero-Cost Workforce for the State: The government gains a volunteer workforce equivalent to 500 full-time employees (based on 10,000 volunteers × 2 hours per week).
- Estimated PKR 2-3 billion savings in social costs (health, justice, policing) across KP and Punjab.²²
- Progress on SDGs 5, 10, and 16: SDG simulation models confirm that youth engagement accelerates SDG progress by 15-20% when scaled nationally.²³

Based on these benchmarks and the low-cost volunteer model of Aawaz II, community hubs, and behavioural change approach, a conservative estimate of SROI for Pakistan would be 4.5:1 to 6:1, that is, every PKR 1 invested could generate PKR 4.5-6 in social and economic value over 5 years.

The economic rationale for integration is reinforced by the opportunity cost of non-investment. Continued disengagement of youth, especially the 21.8 million NEET population,²⁴ translates into lost productivity, higher social costs, and increased fiscal burden on health, justice, and policing systems. Failure to institutionalise youth-led norm change risks perpetuating these costs, undermining progress on SDGs 5, 10, and 16, and eroding Pakistan's demographic dividend. Evidence suggests that the cost of containing social unrest and managing the 'youth deficit' (disengaged or radicalised youth) significantly outweighs the investment required for preventative engagement.

Given the strong economic and social justifications for integration, the following section outlines key policy measures to integrate the Aawaz II model into government mechanisms to upscale youth engagement.

²² Based on WHO and UNFPA models for GBV and child marriage prevention

²³ Adopting UN Youth2030 and IFRC Youth Engagement Strategy.

²⁴ Gallup Pakistan & PRIDE Research, 'Untapped Potential...', Gallup Pakistan, 3 March 2023, <https://gallup.com.pk/post/34213>,

5.A Practical Roadmap for Integration

Global best practices show that youth engagement succeeds when it is incremental, moving from basic civic awareness to active leadership, and institutionalised within formal governance frameworks. As recommended by the UN Youth 2030 strategy and the OECD Civic Engagement Frameworks, formal governance encompasses structured, legally recognised mechanisms for citizen participation. The Aawaz II model mirrors these principles and progression. In this section, we propose policy recommendations for integrating Aawaz II within existing government structures, followed by outlining possible risks and their mitigation strategies.

5.1 Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations outline how the Governments of Punjab and KP can adopt this framework to operationalise their youth policies, ensuring both school-going and out-of-school youth progress from awareness to active citizenship. Recognising that provincial departments differ in absorption capacity, we suggest that the integration should be phased, beginning with departments that have existing community engagement mandates (LG & Youth Affairs), followed by Education and P&D departments as institutional capacity strengthens.

5.1.1 Institutionalising Youth Voices in Local Government

- The Action: The Local Government and Community Development Department (LG&CDD) can issue a notification designating Aawaz Village and District Forums as official 'Citizen Liaison Committees' at the UC and district level for social sector oversight.
- Addressing Rigidity: To avoid the risk of membership becoming static or bureaucratic, the notification can mandate a 'Dynamic Roster' system. Membership can be term-limited (e.g., 2 years) to

ensure that the platform remains youthful and representative. Moreover, notifications should mandate quotas (e.g., equal representation of females and seats for minorities and PWDs).

- Value Add: This gives youth a formal, but flexible, mandate to review local Annual Development Plans (ADPs), participate in shaping district budgets for the next year, moving them beyond ad-hoc consultations to structured governance roles. At the same time, it builds their policy and decision-making capacity and enhances leadership skills.

5.1.2 Establishing a Civic Service Pathway (Incremental Inclusion)

- The Action: The Youth Affairs and Higher Education Departments should notify Aawaz Change Agents (ACAs) as the province's recognised 'Civic Leadership Groups' under provincial youth policy provisions for volunteer recognition.
- The Mechanism: This creates a tiered pathway for youth aged 18-29:
 - Tier 1 (University/College): Students undergo the 'Social Inclusion' training (adapting the Aawaz II module) as part of their co-curricular activities.
 - Tier 2 (Community Leadership): Community youth also receive similar training.²⁵ Graduates of Tiers 1 and 2 are connected and deployed as community volunteers (ACAs) to lead behaviour change and prevention campaigns on GBV and child marriage, harmful practices and promote uptake of government services. Selection criteria for Tier 2 must prioritise 'community commitment' over academic qualifications to ensure the inclusion of women, religious minorities, persons with disabilities, transgender persons lower-income and marginalised youth.
- Value Add: This creates a sustainable pipeline of trained youth

²⁵ Aawaz II training modules and communications materials are in simple, easy to understand Urdu and English

leaders who are skilled and ready to support district administrations in times of peace or emergency.

5.1.3 Curriculum Integration for Long-Term Change

- The Action: The Education Department and Provincial Textbook Boards (Punjab and KP) should integrate specific modules on ‘Civic Responsibility and Social Inclusion’ into the curriculum for Grades 11-12 and undergraduate programmes. The modules should be gender-responsive, ensuring equal relevance for male and female youth.
- Specificity: Rather than broad ‘life skills,’ these modules should focus specifically on constitutional rights, tolerance, and mechanisms for reporting harmful practices such as GBV and child marriage.
- Value Add: This ensures that every young person entering adulthood is equipped with the behavioural ‘software’ needed for inclusive citizenship, scaling the Aawaz II impact to the entire student population.

5.1.4 Sustainable Resourcing: The ‘Zero-Cost’ Incentive Model

- The Action: The Planning and Development (P&D) Department should approve a policy linking ACA volunteerism to professional development incentives rather than cash stipends.
- The Incentive: Certified service as an ACA should count as ‘Mandatory Internship Credit’ for degrees or qualify as ‘Verified Professional Experience’ for public sector job applications.
- Justification: This ‘zero-cost’ model is fiscally sustainable, but it requires administrative investment in the form of staff time for coordination and venue space for training, which can be absorbed within existing departmental operational budgets. Key benefit of no-stipend model is that it selects motivated youth who are interested in career growth and public service, rather than

short-term financial gain.²⁶

5.1.5 Capacity Building for Duty Bearers

- The Action: The Management and Professional Development Department (MPDD) and National Institute of Management (NIM) should integrate a mandatory module on ‘Youth-Led Social Accountability’ into promotion exams for Local Government and Social Welfare officers.
- Value Add: Addressing harmful social norms is also a state effectiveness issue, not just a social one. Training officials to manage social conflict and GBV reduces the downstream burden on police and courts, improves service uptake by marginalised groups, and enhances the state’s legitimacy as a responsive protector.

5.1.6 Evidence-Based Monitoring

- The Action: The Youth Affairs Department should establish a cross-departmental working group to track ‘Meaningful Youth Engagement’. Characterised by participation that is sustained, decision-influencing, and institutionally recognised, this initiative will establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) benchmarked against Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey data to target Gender-Based Violence (GBV), social inclusion, and early child marriage attitudes.
- The Metrics: Monitoring should be integrated into existing provincial M&E dashboards to avoid parallel reporting. Indicators should move beyond simple ‘service uptake’ numbers to track behavioural outcomes, such as:
 - Reduction in acceptance of harmful practices (GBV and child marriage) in target communities.
 - Percentage of youth-led referrals that state departments successfully resolve.

²⁶ Cash stipends often create dependency and fiduciary risks as well. Linking engagement to career pathways ensures merit-based incentives in addition to being financially sustainable.

- The participation of women, minorities, and PWDs should be tracked through disaggregated KPIs.
- Value Add: This shifts the focus from ‘counting heads’ to ‘measuring change,’ ensuring the state can adapt its strategies based on real-world social impact.

For successful implementation of these recommendations, we suggest that the District Coordination Office act as a light-touch convening authority, linking forums, volunteers, and line departments through notifications and reporting channels. Practically, this ensures that forum referrals connect directly to active state resources, including linking PWDs to Bait-ul-Maal, aspiring entrepreneurs to the PM’s Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme, and out-of-school youth to relevant programmes (e.g. Punjab Human Capital Investment Project). This coordination role grants the forums institutional legitimacy while preserving their community-driven autonomy.

5.2 Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Aawaz II integration roadmap is designed for sustainability. The following risks were identified; safeguarding measures are embedded in each recommendation to address them.

Table 2: Risk and Mitigation Strategies

Risks	Mitigation Strategies
Political Capture of Youth Forums	Mandate transparent membership criteria, dynamic rosters, and term limits through official notifications.
Volunteer Fatigue / Attrition	Link volunteer service to career credits and recognition (as outlined in Section 5.1.4), ensuring long-term motivation without fiscal burden.
Institutional Resistance	Embed integration steps in existing rules and performance frameworks and provide capacity-building modules for duty bearers (Section 5.1.5).
Uneven Implementation Across Districts	Align monitoring with provincial M&E dashboards and KPIs (Section 5.1.6) to ensure consistency and accountability.

6. Priority Actions for Immediate Consideration

To initiate the integration process recommended in the previous section, the government should prioritise three high-impact actions that utilise existing infrastructure, require minimal fiscal outlay, and directly address gaps identified in youth engagement. Additionally, to ensure accountability and coherence across these diverse actions, the Planning and Development (P&D) Department is proposed as the convening authority for coordination and reporting, leveraging its existing mandate for inter-sectoral planning. Each action below includes a clear rationale for why it is a priority.

6.1 Institutionalising Village and District Forums in Local Government

- Rationale: Currently, District Youth/Social Welfare Officers often lack a structured grassroots mechanism to execute behaviour change campaigns; their roles are usually limited to administrative oversight or managing static facilities. This action will formalise an existing, proven platform without creating new administrative layers, ensuring youth voices influence local development planning.
- Sustainability: To ensure sustainability beyond leadership turnover, institutionalisation should be anchored in formal notifications and integrated into Local Government performance frameworks, making ‘youth engagement meetings’ a mandatory reporting KPI. This creates a rule-based mandate that survives administrative changes.
- Who leads? Departments with field formations, such as the Social Welfare Department and the Local Government. They will collaborate with the Youth Affairs Department, District Committees (women and child protection, etc.).

7. Conclusion

The experience of Aawaz II shows that youth are not just beneficiaries but essential partners in social change. The Aawaz II model provides a proven, cost-effective blueprint that is ready for government adoption.

The path to integration requires relatively low institutional effort, leveraging existing structures, yet failure to act carries significant long-term costs in lost productivity, higher social expenditures, deepening youth disengagement, and keeping a generation disconnected from the state and vulnerable to social fragmentation.

By formally embedding the Aawaz II model into official systems, the provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can transform Pakistan's demographic potential into a true governance strength. While the model is highly scalable, its success will depend on maintaining the quality of volunteer training and ensuring consistent departmental ownership. Institutionalising this engagement will ensure that youth energy becomes a permanent driver of inclusive governance, building the foundations of a stable and responsive state that evidence shows is directly linked to higher national well-being.

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