PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL POVERTY LINE

A Diagnostic Review of History, Methodology, Governance, and Reform

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pakistan adopted its first official poverty line only in 2001, anchored on a normative **2,350 calories per adult equivalent per day** and estimated through the Food Energy Intake (FEI) method. In 2013-14 the Government shifted to the **Cost of Basic Needs (CBN)** approach, retaining the calorie anchor for the food component but adding an explicit non-food allowance, setting the benchmark line at Rs 3,030.32 per adult equivalent per month. That benchmark is carried forward between surveys by CPI inflation: it reached **Rs 8,484 in 2024-25** (≈ US$3.50/day, 2021 PPP), on which the national headcount **rose to 28.9% from 21.9% in 2018-19** — the largest reversal in the published series, with the Gini rising 28.4 → 32.7. Governance is split: PBS supplies the data, the Ministry of Planning estimates poverty through a Technical Committee, and the Ministry of Finance publishes via the Economic Survey. Pakistan's method is internationally mainstream, but it is undermined by an ageing 2013-14 benchmark, a fixed food basket, weak spatial pricing, and widening survey gaps. This brief diagnoses the system end-to-end and sets out a reform agenda: re-base the line, restore survey cadence, institutionalise the Technical Committee, and report transparently against both national and World Bank thresholds.

Key Terms: *Cost of Basic Needs · Food Energy Intake · Per Adult Equivalent · Poverty Headcount · Purchasing Power Parity · Multidimensional Poverty · Spatial Price Deflator*

AT A GLANCE: POVERTY-MEASUREMENT INDICATORS

Indicator	Value	Source (APA)
Caloric anchor	2,350 kcal/AE/day (2,150 urban; 2,450 rural)	Planning Commission (2001)
Current national poverty line	Rs 8,484 per AE/month (2024-25)	Economic Survey 2025-26
National headcount	28.9% (2024-25), up from 21.9% (2018-19)	Economic Survey 2025-26
Methodological benchmark	2013-14 (CBN); Rs 3,030.32 base	Ministry of Planning (2016)
Inequality (Gini)	32.7 (2024-25), up from 28.4	Economic Survey 2025-26
World Bank LMIC line	US$4.20/day → ≈44.7% of Pakistanis poor	World Bank (2025)
Population below national line	≈ 105 million (2024-25, est.)	Author estimate from ES 2025-26

AE = adult equivalent; PPP = purchasing power parity. The 2024-25 figures are from the Economic Survey 2025-26 statistical annex (Table 16.1).

01 | THE PROBLEM: FROM CALORIE COUNTS TO A CONTESTED POVERTY LINE

Systematic poverty measurement in Pakistan began as an academic enterprise. The pioneering study is S. M. Naseem's *Mass Poverty in Pakistan* (1973), followed through the 1970s–1980s by independent work (Mujahid 1978; Malik 1988, 1991; Ercelawn 1990; Gazdar et al. 1994) that used inconsistent thresholds and produced non-comparable trends. The State therefore had no single authoritative number until **2001 — fifty-three years after independence — when the Planning Commission adopted the first official poverty line**.

Pakistan chose a calorie-anchored absolute line for reasons common across the developing world: it is **normative and objective** (a nutrition-based floor is more defensible than an arbitrary cut-off); **operationally tractable** (consumption surveys record food quantities convertible to calories); and **absolute**, so its real value can be held fixed and genuine trends tracked. The 2,350-calorie norm derives from FAO/WHO energy-requirement guidance adapted to Pakistan's demographic and activity profile.

Method then evolved in four phases: an **academic phase** (1963–2000, no official line); an **official FEI phase** (2001–c.2013, Food Energy Intake anchored on 2,350 kcal); the **CBN transition** (2013-14, formalised 2015-16, separating an explicit food line from a non-food allowance); and a **multidimensional complement** (the official MPI launched with UNDP/OPHI in 2016, used alongside the monetary line).

The diagnostic urgency of this brief comes from the latest data. The Economic Survey 2025-26 records the sharpest reversal in the published series: the national headcount **rose to 28.9% in 2024-25 from 21.9% in 2018-19** — up 7.0 percentage points — with the CBN line at **Rs 8,484 per adult equivalent per month** (≈ US$3.50/day at 2021 PPP) and the Gini index rising from 28.4 to 32.7. On the order of 100–105 million people fell below the national line, undoing more than a decade of poverty decline in six years of crisis and stabilisation — even though the line in use remains a CPI-updated version of the decade-old 2013-14 benchmark.

Table 1 — Evolution of poverty-line methodology in Pakistan

Year	Methodology	Institution	Key change
1973	Arbitrary expenditure line (academic)	Naseem / PIDE	First quantitative absolute-poverty estimates
2001	Food Energy Intake (FEI), 2,350 kcal/AE/day	Planning Commission	First official line; base FY1999 ≈ Rs 670/capita/month
2001–2013	FEI, inflation-updated	Planning Commission / FBS-PBS	1998-99 basket; line regressed on lowest 60% expenditure
2013-14	Cost of Basic Needs (CBN)	Ministry of Planning; Technical Committee	Explicit food + non-food line; Rs 3,030.32/AE/month
2015-16	CBN formally announced	Ministry of Planning / PBS	Headcount 24.3%; adoption publicised
2016	Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	Planning Ministry, UNDP, OPHI	Non-monetary complement
2018-19	CBN, CPI-updated	Ministry of Planning / PBS	Line ≈ Rs 3,776; headcount 21.9%
2024-25	CBN, CPI-updated	Ministry of Planning / PBS	Line Rs 8,484; headcount 28.9% (ES 2025-26)

Sources: Economic Survey of Pakistan (2015-16 Annexure-III; 2025-26); Naseem (1973, 2012); ADB (2002); PIDE (2025).

02 | HOW THE LINE IS BUILT: METHODOLOGY OF THE NATIONAL POVERTY LINE

Pakistan measures welfare in the **consumption-expenditure** space rather than income, because consumption is smoother, better captures permanent income, is less under-reported, and is more meaningful where activity is largely informal. The welfare metric is **real consumption per adult equivalent per month**, spatially adjusted; a household is poor if this falls below the line.

The caloric requirement

The dietary-energy anchor is **2,350 kcal per adult equivalent per day** (2,150 urban; 2,450 rural, reflecting higher rural physical labour), adopted in 2001 and retained when the food line was rebuilt under CBN in 2013-14 — providing continuity across the FEI-to-CBN transition.

Adult equivalence (Per Adult Equivalent, PAE)

Because households differ in size and composition, total consumption is divided by adult equivalents rather than persons:

$$y_h = C_h / AE_h \,, \quad AE_h = \Sigma_i\, \alpha_i \quad (\alpha_i = \text{adult-equivalent weight of member } i)$$

Each member receives a weight by age and sex (an adult male ≈ 1.0, with lower weights for women, children, infants). **Worked example:** a household of one man (1.00), one woman (0.80), one child (0.65) and one infant (0.40) = 2.85 AE. With consumption of Rs 26,000/month, per-AE consumption = 26,000 / 2.85 ≈ Rs 9,123 — above the 2024-25 line of Rs 8,484, so **non-poor**, though it would be classified poor on a naive per-capita basis (Rs 6,500). Weights are illustrative; PBS applies its official scale.

The food poverty line (FPL)

Under CBN the FPL is built in three steps: (1) select a **reference group** (roughly the 10th–40th consumption percentiles); (2) price their actual food basket and compute its energy, yielding a calorie-to-cost conversion; (3) scale that cost to the 2,350-kcal norm:

$$FPL = (p \cdot q) \times (2350 / E(q))$$

The non-food component and the total line

A purely caloric line ignores housing, utilities, clothing, transport, education, and health. CBN adds a **non-food allowance** estimated from the non-food spending of households near the FPL — a *lower bound* (households whose total expenditure equals the FPL) or *upper bound* (whose food expenditure equals the FPL). The total line is:

$$Z = FPL + NF_p \quad \Rightarrow \quad Z_{2013-14} = \text{Rs } 3{,}030.32 \text{ per AE/month}$$

From line to headcount: the FGT indices

Poverty is summarised by the Foster–Greer–Thorbecke family:

$$P\alpha = (1/N)\, \Sigma\, [\, (Z - y_i)/Z\,]\hat{}\alpha \quad \text{for } y_i < Z$$

α = 0 gives the **headcount** (incidence), α = 1 the **poverty gap** (depth), and α = 2 the **squared gap** (severity). Pakistan's headline figure is the headcount, but the gap and severity measures are essential for targeting.

03 | WHO SETS THE LINE: GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The **Planning Commission** is the methodological home of official measurement: it approved the 2001 line, set the calorie norm and reference parameters, housed the Centre for Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution (CPRID), and led the CBN and MPI transitions; these functions sit within the **Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives**. The **Ministry of Finance** is the principal *publisher* through the annual Economic Survey but is not the methodological authority. The **Pakistan Bureau of Statistics** is the data authority: it fields the HIES (roughly biennial since 1963) and PSLM surveys, releases microdata, and conducted the 2023 digital Census. In the official division of labour, **PBS provides data while the Ministry estimates poverty**, executed through a **Technical Committee on Poverty** of which PBS is a member.

International agencies support without owning the line: the World Bank aids survey design and diagnostics and supplies comparable estimates; UNDP and OPHI co-developed the MPI; the IMF was involved in the

2001 Interim PRSP; ADB documented the early methodology. The apparent "shift" between the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance is largely about which document the public sees — the Economic Survey (Finance) versus technical and National Poverty Reports (Planning/PBS); methodological authority has remained with the planning function throughout. The genuine development was formalising the Technical Committee and clarifying that PBS supplies data while Planning estimates — a separation intended to insulate methodology from budget-presentation incentives.

Table 2 — Governance timeline and institutional mandates

Period	Lead arrangement	Mandate / development
Pre-2001	Academic & FBS surveys	No official line; researchers estimate independently
2001	Planning Commission	Adopts first official FEI line (2,350 kcal/AE/day); CPRID houses analysis
2008–2010	Panel of Economists	Reviews methodology; recommends move toward CBN
2013-14	Ministry of Planning + Technical Committee	CBN methodology adopted; Rs 3,030.32 line computed
2016	Planning Ministry + UNDP/OPHI	Official MPI launched as complement
Present	Planning (estimation) + PBS (data) + Finance (publication)	Technical Committee estimates; PBS supplies microdata & Census; Finance publishes via Economic Survey

Sources: MPPN (2025); Economic Survey 2015-16 (Annexure-III); ADB (2002); Planning Ministry / PBS.

04 | UPDATES, REVISIONS, AND TRENDS ACROSS GOVERNMENTS

Two operations must be separated. A **full methodological revision** rebuilds the line from new survey data — fresh reference group, re-priced basket, recomputed calorie-to-cost conversion, re-estimated non-food allowance — changing the *real* standard. An **inflation update** leaves methodology fixed and carries the line forward by CPI to preserve purchasing power. Most year-to-year movement is inflation, not revision.

The last comprehensive re-estimation was the move to CBN on **2013-14 HIES data**, giving the benchmark of Rs 3,030.32. **2013-14 is therefore the current methodological benchmark**; 2015-16, 2018-19, and 2024-25 are CPI-updated values of that same real line via $Z_s = Z_0 \times (CPI_s / CPI_0)$. The structural basket underpinning the official line is now more than a decade old.

Table 3 — Poverty-line values: benchmark versus inflation update

Benchmark / year	Line (Rs/AE/mo)	Revision or update	Data source
FY1999 (FEI base)	≈ 670 /capita	Methodological base (FEI)	Planning Commission; HIES 1998-99
2013-14 (CBN)	3,030.32	Full methodological revision	Ministry of Planning; HIES 2013-14
2015-16 (CBN)	≈ 3,250	Inflation update (CPI)	PBS / HIICS 2015-16
2018-19 (CBN)	≈ 3,776	Inflation update (CPI)	PBS / HIES 2018-19
2024-25 (CBN)	8,484	Inflation update (CPI)	PBS / HIES; ES 2025-26

FEI-era and CBN-era lines are not directly comparable; the 2013-14 revision raised the real standard (the 2013-14 headcount jumped from 9.3% under FEI to 29.5% under CBN).

Trends across administrations (CBN basis)

Because the methodology changed in 2013-14, pre/post headcounts are not strictly comparable; the consistent CBN back-series is used below. Under the **PPP government (2008–2013)** the CBN headcount fell from ≈50.4% (2005-06) to 29.5% (2013-14), though the older FEI line then in use flattered the picture (single digits by 2013-14). The **PML-N government (2013–2018)** delivered the decisive reform — CBN adoption that deliberately "raised the bar" — with the headcount at 24.3% in 2015-16. The **PTI government (2018–2022)** recorded the series low of 21.9% (2018-19), before the inflation surge and COVID shock registered. The **current period (2022–2026)** shows the reversal to 28.9% (2024-25) at a line of Rs 8,484, with inequality rising in tandem.

Table 4 — National poverty line and headcount by administration (CBN basis)

Government	Period	Line (Rs/AE/mo)	Headcount	Basis
PPP	2008–2013	FEI in use; CBN back-series	50.4% → 29.5%	FEI official; CBN re-estimated
PML-N	2013–2018	3,030 → ~3,250	29.5% → 24.3%	CBN adopted (2013-14)
PTI	2018–2022	~3,776	21.9% (2018-19)	CBN, CPI-updated
Current	2022–2026	8,484 (2024-25)	28.9% (2024-25)	CBN, CPI-updated

Sources: Economic Survey 2015-16 & 2025-26; PBS National Poverty Reports; PIDE (2025). The nominal line rose ~2.8× from 2013-14 to 2024-25 almost entirely on CPI inflation, not a higher real standard.

05 | INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING: NATIONAL LINES AND WORLD BANK THRESHOLDS

National lines persist alongside global thresholds because poverty is partly context-specific: cost-of-living differences, consumption patterns, social norms, development level, and welfare/entitlement design all vary. The World Bank itself advises countries to maintain national lines. Pakistan's caloric-anchored CBN design is shared by Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and (in modified form) South Africa; India has frozen its official monetary line at the 2011-12 Tendulkar estimate and now leads with a national MPI.

Table 5 — National poverty-line comparison matrix

Country	Methodology	Institution	Calorie anchor	Update frequency
Pakistan	CBN (food + non-food)	Planning Ministry / PBS	2,350 kcal/AE/day	Benchmark 2013-14; CPI between
India	Tendulkar basket; MPI lead	NSSO / NITI Aayog	Calorie-linked (legacy)	Monetary frozen since 2011-12
Bangladesh	CBN, upper & lower lines	BBS	~2,122 kcal/day	Every ~5 years (HIES)
Sri Lanka	CBN / official OPL	DCS	~2,030 kcal/day	Monthly (CPI) + by district
Nepal	CBN	National Statistics Office	Energy-anchored	Re-based 2022-23 (NLSS IV)
Indonesia	CBN (food + non-food)	BPS	2,100 kcal/day	Semi-annual (Mar & Sep)
Vietnam	Multidimensional + income	GSO / MOLISA	n/a (multidimensional)	Period standards (2022–25)
Philippines	Food + non-food threshold	PSA	~2,000 kcal/day	Semestral
Egypt	CBN, lower & upper	CAPMAS	Energy-anchored	With each HIECS
Morocco	Absolute CBN + relative	HCP	Energy-anchored	With each survey
South Africa	Food / Lower / Upper-bound	Statistics SA	2,100 kcal/day	Annual

Sources: national statistical offices; World Bank Poverty & Equity Briefs. Pakistan is mainstream in line type but weakest in update discipline (Indonesia re-estimates semi-annually, Sri Lanka monthly, South Africa annually).

Pakistan versus the World Bank lines

The World Bank's international line has evolved from US$1/day (1990) through US$1.25 (2005 PPP), US$1.90 (2011 PPP), US$2.15 (2017 PPP) to **US$3.00/day (2021 PPP, June 2025)**, with lower- and upper-middle-income lines now **US$4.20** and **US$8.30**. All three are medians of national lines within an income group —

built *from* national lines, not against them. The two answer different questions: the national line asks who is poor by Pakistan's own basket; the World Bank line asks how Pakistan compares on a single PPP-converted yardstick. Against the **US$4.20 lower-middle-income line**, roughly **44.7% of Pakistanis** are poor and over 16% fall below US$3.00 — far above the national 28.9%, because the national line (≈ US$3.50/day) sits below the US$4.20 standard. Both are internally valid.

Table 6 — Pakistan National Poverty Line versus World Bank lines

Feature	Pakistan National Poverty Line	World Bank international lines
Purpose	Domestic basic-needs standard & targeting	Global comparability across countries
Method	CBN: 2,350 kcal food basket + non-food	Median of national lines in an income group (PPP$)
Welfare metric	Consumption per adult equivalent	Consumption/income per capita (PPP-converted)
Current value	Rs 8,484/AE/mo (2024-25) ≈ $3.50/day	$3.00 / $4.20 / $8.30 per day (2021 PPP)
Pakistan headcount	28.9% (2024-25)	16%+ at $3.00; ≈44.7% at $4.20 (LMIC)
Updated	Benchmark 2013-14; CPI between	Re-based with PPP rounds (last June 2025)
Authority	Planning Ministry / PBS	World Bank (PIP)

Sources: World Bank (2025) June update & Poverty/Equity Brief; Economic Survey 2025-26; Foster et al. (2025) PRWP 11137.

06 | THE ISSUES: STRENGTHS AND STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES

Pakistan's methodology has real strengths. It is **internationally mainstream** — the CBN-with-calorie-anchor design aligns with World Bank guidance and regional peers and already supersedes a pure calorie line by costing non-food needs explicitly. It uses a **consumption-based welfare metric** appropriate to an informal economy, fixes an **absolute** standard that allows genuine trend analysis, releases **public microdata** that enable independent replication, and is **complemented by an official MPI** capturing non-monetary deprivation.

These strengths are offset by a cluster of structural weaknesses — discussed in full below rather than reduced to a fixed count. Together they explain why the system was slow to register the 2024-25 reversal and why measured poverty diverges so sharply from the World Bank's.

The weaknesses, in turn

- **Stale benchmark.** The structural basket dates to 2013-14, predating the 2022 floods, the post-2018 inflation surge (peaking near 29% in FY2023), and the 2023 Census. The line's real content no longer matches current consumption.
- **Calorie-centric food anchor.** A fixed 2,350-kcal target captures energy but not dietary quality or micronutrient adequacy, and a fixed basket lags shifts toward dairy, protein, and processed foods.
- **Weak spatial and urban–rural price adjustment.** A single national line — even with separate urban/rural calorie norms — imperfectly reflects large inter-provincial and intra-urban price differences.
- **Under-weighted non-food growth.** Rising shares of housing, energy, transport, health, education, and connectivity in poor households' budgets are under-weighted by a decade-old allowance.
- **Survey-cadence gaps.** Widening intervals between comparable surveys delay detection of welfare shocks — the 2024-25 reversal was visible only years after it began.
- **Comparability breaks.** The 2013-14 methodology change makes long pre/post comparisons hazardous and is frequently mishandled in public debate.
- **Inequality blind spot.** A headcount alone ignores depth and distribution; the rising Gini (28.4 → 32.7) shows why gap, severity, and distributional reporting matter.

- **Divergence from global lines.** The gap between the national 28.9% and the US$4.20 figure of ≈44.7% confuses public debate when the two are not explained side by side.

Table 7 — Issue analysis matrix

Issue	Diagnosis	Consequence	Priority
Stale 2013-14 benchmark	Structural basket not re-based in over a decade	Line mis-measures contemporary poverty	Critical
Calorie-centric anchor	Energy target ignores diet quality/micronutrients	Understates nutritional deprivation	High
Weak spatial pricing	Single line; coarse urban/rural split	Mis-targets across provinces & cities	High
Non-food under-weighting	Decade-old allowance vs rising essential costs	Line too low for real basic needs	High
Survey-cadence gaps	Widening intervals between comparable surveys	Late detection of welfare shocks	Critical
Comparability breaks	FEI→CBN shift severs the long series	Mishandled trend claims in debate	Medium
Headcount-only reporting	Depth/distribution under-reported	Weak targeting; inequality hidden	Medium
National vs global divergence	Lines reported without joint explanation	Public confusion over “true” poverty	Medium

The framework is structurally sound but operationally under-maintained; the binding problems are infrequent re-basing, a fixed basket, weak spatial pricing, and survey gaps — all fixable through disciplined updating rather than wholesale replacement.

07 | POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: A REFORM AGENDA

The evidence points not toward replacing the framework but toward maintaining it with discipline. The recommendations below address every issue identified above — presented in full rather than capped at a fixed number — each with a named institutional lead and, where instructive, an international precedent.

1

Retain and strengthen the CBN approach

The **Ministry of Planning** should retain the Cost of Basic Needs framework rather than revert to a pure caloric (FEI) line. CBN already supplements the calorie anchor with explicit non-food costing and is the international standard; the policy question is not CBN-versus-calorie but keeping the CBN line current.

International Precedent: *World Bank CBN guidance; adopted by Bangladesh (BBS), Indonesia (BPS), and Sri Lanka (DCS).*

2

Re-base the line on fresh HIES data and the 2023 Census

Commission a **full methodological re-estimation** — new reference group, re-priced basket, recomputed calorie-to-cost conversion, updated non-food allowance — using the latest HIES and 2023 Census population weights, led by the Technical Committee with PBS.

International Precedent: *Bangladesh re-bases its CBN lines with each quinquennial HIES.*

3

Modernise the food basket and add dietary quality

Refresh the food basket to reflect current diets and incorporate basic **dietary-quality and micronutrient** considerations alongside the 2,350-kcal energy anchor, so the line captures nutritional adequacy, not energy alone.

International Precedent: *FAO food-based dietary guidelines; South Africa's nutrition-anchored food poverty line.*

4 Adopt a fixed re-basing cycle and a transparent methodology note

The **Ministry of Planning** should institutionalise a **7–10-year re-basing cycle** (or after major structural shocks) and publish a reproducible methodology note — including code and parameter choices — with every release.

International Precedent: *World Bank practice of periodic PPP-driven re-basing.*

5 Report depth, severity, and distribution — not only the headcount

Publish the **poverty gap (P_1) and squared gap (P_2)** and distributional measures alongside the headcount in the headline release, not only in technical annexes, so targeting reflects how poor the poor are.

International Precedent: *World Bank Poverty & Equity Briefs report the full FGT family.*

6 Restore a reliable biennial survey cycle

The **Pakistan Bureau of Statistics**, funded by the Ministry of Finance, should return HIES to a dependable **biennial** cycle so welfare shocks are detected promptly rather than years late.

International Precedent: *Indonesia (Susenas) fields semi-annually; Sri Lanka updates monthly.*

7 Introduce province- and city-level spatial price deflators

Build **spatial price deflators** so the line reflects real cost-of-living differences across provinces and between large cities and their hinterlands, improving targeting accuracy.

International Precedent: *Indonesia computes province-level lines; India varies lines by state and sector.*

8 Place the Technical Committee on a statutory footing

Establish the **Technical Committee on Poverty** in statute with a published mandate, fixed membership (Planning, PBS, provincial bureaus, independent economists), and protection from budget-cycle pressure.

International Precedent: *Statistics South Africa's legislated independence in setting poverty lines.*

9 Codify the data–estimation–publication division of labour

Clarify in statute the **PBS-provides-data** / **Planning-estimates** / **Finance-publishes** division to prevent confusion and preserve methodological independence from presentational incentives.

10 Build provincial CBN poverty lines

Develop **provincial CBN lines** so the post-18th-Amendment provinces — which run health, education, and social protection — can target using sub-national poverty estimates.

International Precedent: *Indonesia's BPS publishes provincial poverty lines for sub-national targeting.*

11

Publish national and World Bank lines side by side

Present the **national line and the World Bank $3.00/$4.20** figures together in the Economic Survey, with a plain-language note explaining why they differ, to pre-empt the recurring "which number is right?" controversy.

International Precedent: *Statistics Indonesia (BPS) publishes an explainer reconciling national and World Bank rates.*

12

Maintain and integrate the MPI

Keep the **Multidimensional Poverty Index** as a standing complement and link monetary and multidimensional poverty in a single annual welfare report led by the Planning Ministry.

International Precedent: *OPHI–UNDP global MPI; Pakistan's own 2016 MPI launch.*

Table 8 — Implementation roadmap

Reform	Lead institution	Int'l precedent	Horizon
Report depth/severity; codify roles	Planning / PBS	WB Poverty Briefs	Near-term (0–12 mo)
Restore biennial HIES; methodology note	PBS / Finance	Indonesia Susenas	Near-term (0–12 mo)
Re-base line; modernise basket	Planning + Tech. Committee	Bangladesh HIES	Medium-term (1–3 yr)
Spatial deflators; national+WB reporting	PBS / Planning	India; BPS Indonesia	Medium-term (1–3 yr)
Statutory committee; provincial lines	Planning / Provinces	Stats SA; BPS	Long-term (3–5 yr)
Fixed re-basing cycle; integrate MPI	Planning Ministry	World Bank; OPHI	Long-term (3–5 yr)

A sequenced package: report and re-cadence first; re-base and spatially price next; institutionalise last.

08 | CONCLUSION

Pakistan's caloric-based national poverty line is a sound instrument that has been allowed to age. Its architecture — a consumption-based, calorie-anchored Cost of Basic Needs line — is defensible and internationally comparable in design. What fails is maintenance: a benchmark frozen at 2013-14, a food basket overtaken by dietary change, spatial pricing too coarse for a diverse federation, and surveys too infrequent to catch a shock in time.

The 2024-25 reversal — 28.9% poor, inequality climbing, perhaps 105 million below the line — was real, but the measurement system reported it late and imperfectly. The remedy is not to abandon the method but to discipline it: re-base on fresh data and the 2023 Census, restore a biennial cadence, price the line spatially, institutionalise the Technical Committee, and report depth and distribution against both national and global yardsticks.

A poverty line is only as honest as the data behind it and only as useful as the frequency with which it is refreshed. Pakistan has the framework; what it now needs is the discipline to keep it current — before the next shock, not after it.

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