



# Policy Brief

## GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES UNDER COALITION GOVERNMENT: A CASE OF BALOCHISTAN FROM 2013 TO 2023

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### INTRODUCTION

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan in term of land and the smallest in term of population. The province, despite being rich in mineral and natural resources along with longest coastline belt, remained one of the most backward provinces of Pakistan. This contrast between backward condition and rich potentialities by nature are the result of governance issues.

Balochistan remains stuck in a cycle of poverty. It has the highest Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) at 69.5% to 71.2% in Pakistan. MPI represents a critical mass of deprivations in education, health, and basic living standards. Deprivations in education, health, and basic living standards reflect political instability, governance issues, and poor infrastructure, deterring investment. This project investigated impacts of governance dynamics on evolution and implementation of health and education policies under coalition governments from 2013 to 2018 and 2018 to 2023 and proposed policy recommendations to improve health and education sectoral outcomes.

Key objectives of Project have been:

- 1) To identify the impacts of coalition government dynamics on the formulation and implementation of health and education policies in Balochistan since 2013
- 2) To investigate the challenges of coalition government in the process of the allocation and distribution of provincial resource funds, particularly in the sectors of health and education.
- 3) To recommend policy options for the coalition government of Balochistan to tackle the governance challenges, particularly in the sectors of education and health.



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## METHODOLOGY

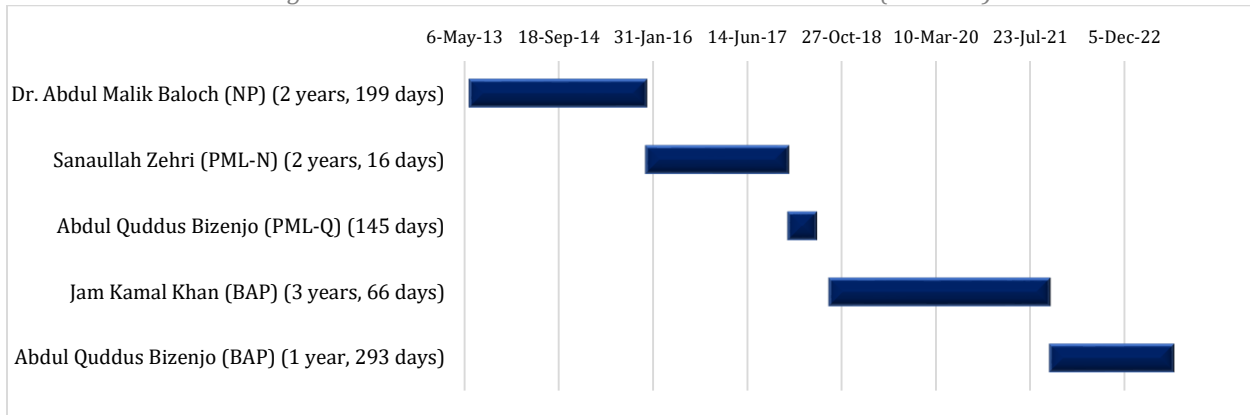
Mixed methods have been adopted to investigate governance challenges, stakeholder opinions and policy processes under coalition regime in Balochistan. Interviews with policymakers, experts, officials and members of civil society were conducted to get insights into perceptions of policy formation and implementation. Paper triangulates policy documents, interviews, secondary data and government reports to get deeper understanding of coalition governance's impact on policy outcomes. Thematic analysis of interviews was conducted using NVivo software.

## FINDINGS

### *Leadership Instability under Coalition Politics in Balochistan (2013-23)*

The study demonstrates that Balochistan has experienced multiple fragile and compromised coalition regimes from 2013 to 2023, predominantly formed and manipulated by external political influences rather than through a genuine popular mandate in Balochistan. Study period witnessed two coalition governments (2013-18 and 2018-23), led by five Chief Ministers with very short tenure and interesting fact found that the most of the Chief Ministers were dismissed via a no-confidence motion within their own party.

Figure 1: Coalition Government Tenures in Balochistan (2013-24)



Source: Authors' compilations.

The Study found that leadership crisis under coalition politics continued throughout the study period.

### *Persistent Reshuffle of Bureaucrats: Impacts on Governance in Balochistan (2013-2023)*

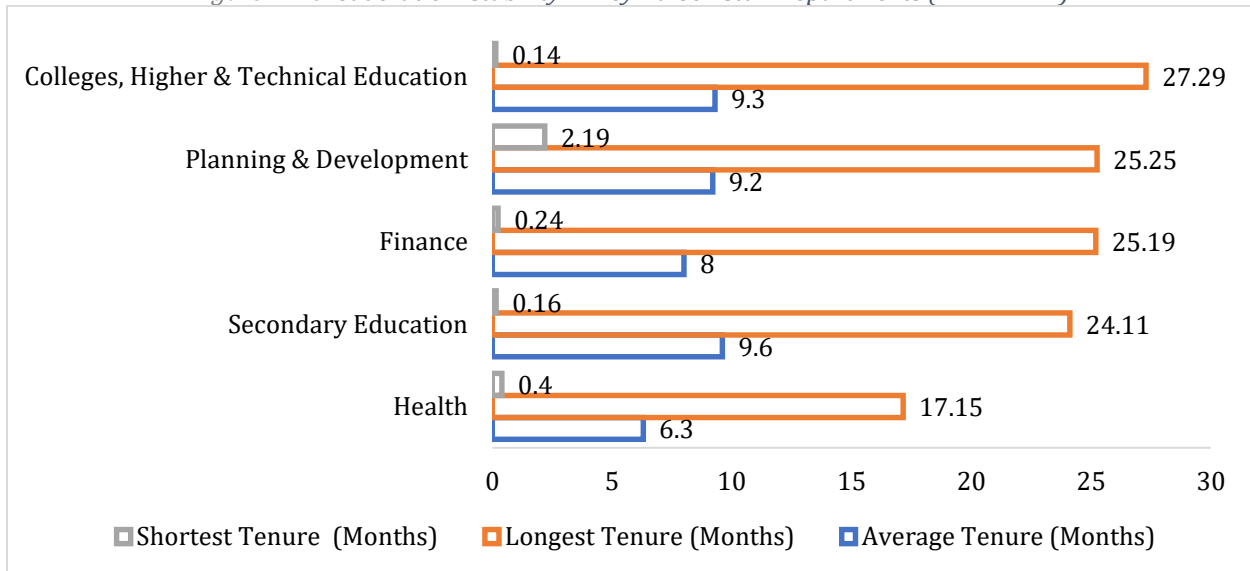
Evidence shows continuous political changes resulted persistent bureaucratic posting and transfer from 2013 to 2023 which hampered meaningful reforms and policy continuity in education and



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health sectors. During this period, regular change of leadership in Balochistan resulted frequent transfer and posting of bureaucrats in senior positions, from example, Health Department witnessed 21 Secretaries, averaging six months each. Similar situations are learnt from Finance and Education Departments which have badly affected well-functioning and handling long-term strategies. Consequently, bureaucracy did not function independently, which has been used as a political tool for political gain.

Figure 2: Bureaucratic Instability in Key Balochistan Departments (2013-2024)



Source: Authors' compilations.

Tenure of Dr. Abdul Malik also witnessed administrative changes where four Secretaries were transferred in both Planning & Development and Health Departments. The situation was further worsened during Sanaullah Zehri regime where five more secretaries were reshuffled in Health and Secondary Education Departments which all were political based, used as a tool for political portage. The same example was followed by Bizenjo in 2018 where in quick two secretaries were transferred in Health and Finance Departments. Regime of Mr. Jam Kamal witnessed serious reshuffle of secretaries frequently where seven Secretaries in Health and six Secretaries in Finance Departments were changed only in three years. Even situation was further deteriorated under second tenure of Bizenjo where seven secretaries of Colleges and Higher Education Department were transferred within two years. Persistent reshuffle in executive positions creates problems in policy implementation and execution. Short-tenure of secretaries brings governance challenges in projecting and implementing the plans for longer period.

Results indicate that frequent transfer of posting of bureaucrats in Balochistan has brought governance challenges in Health and Education Departments. Departments of Education and



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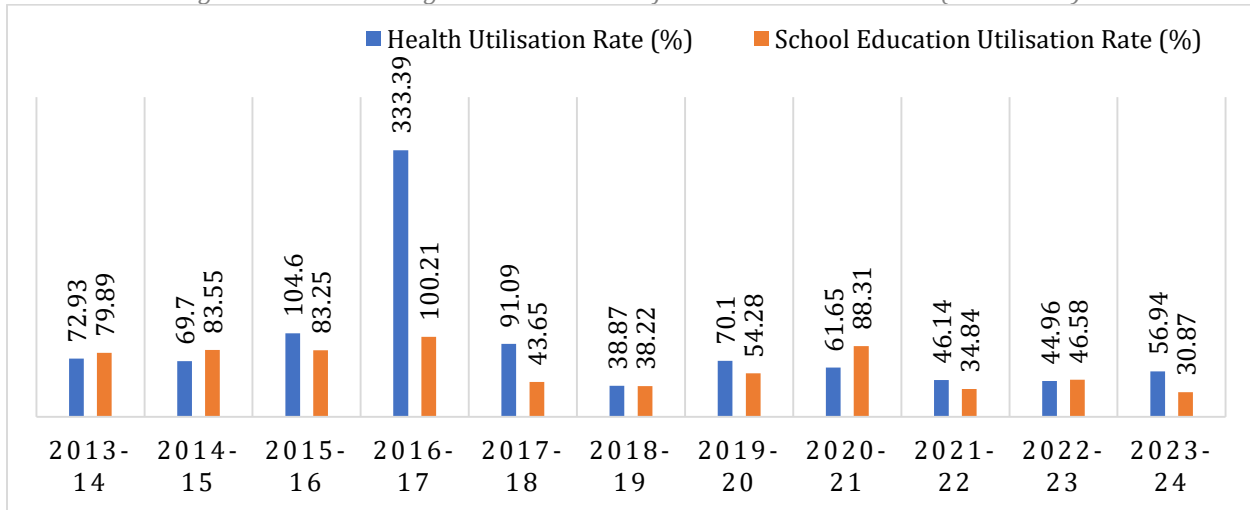
Finance witnessed serious short tenures of secretaries where some of them have served only eight- and nine-month tenures, this led to postponement or delay of implementation and utilization of budget so frequently. This unstable circumstance created uncertainty among bureaucracy who always think of their own professional security rather than any departmental development. The situation demanded more loyalty rather than merit and competency, therefore, most departments in Balochistan remained weak and underdeveloped in term of policy implementation and execution.

## ***Budgetary Mismanagement under Coalition Politics in Balochistan (2013-23)***

Irony of coalition governments in Balochistan is evident in the stark gap between budget allocation and actual utilisation from 2013 to 2023. Data shows that successive coalitions failed to fully spend their allocated budgets.

- In health department, budget utilisation was highly inconsistent, with rates soaring to 333.39% in 2016-17 and dropping to 38.87% in 2018-19, indicating poor planning and management.
- Similarly, Education Department's utilisation fell from 80-85% in 2016-17 to just 43.65% in 2017-18 and 30.87% in 2023-24.

*Figure 3: Selected Budget Utilisation Rates for Health and Education (2013-2024)*



*Source: Author's compilations based on data accessed from P&D Department Government of Balochistan.*

Failure to spend over two-thirds of school development funds has led to infrastructural issues- 79% of schools lack electricity, 71% have no drinking water, 51% lack toilets, and 52% are without boundary walls (Pakistan Institute of Education, 2024). Funds often never reached the front lines. This fiscal inadequacy is mainly due to coalition politics. Frequent turnover of key officials in



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Finance, Planning & Development, and sectoral departments created constant procedural deadlock. New secretaries needed months to understand ongoing projects, only to be transferred, restarting the cycle.

## ***Weak and Compromised Education and Health policies under Coalition Politics in Balochistan (2013-23)***

Documentary evidence uncovered weak education and health policies persisted after the 18th Amendment, despite support from donors. Policies failed to address issues due to limited government attention and faced challenges like high costs and implementation risks. Major reforms faced political resistance. The health sector, supported by WHO, introduced strategies from 2013 to 2030, but stagnation occurred due to poor governance, underfunding, workforce shortages, and political interference.

Analysing secondary data shows rising corruption, low household satisfaction with public services, and worsening human development in Balochistan.

- Corruption is widespread, especially in critical sectors like education and health.
- The Corruption Perception Index (CPI), from 55.7 in 2011 to 45.8 in 2022, indicates increased corruption, with coalition governments since 2008 contributing to instability and corruption, damaging governance and service delivery.
- Household satisfaction surveys reveal varied perceptions. Satisfaction with schools rose from 80.46% to 84.43%, despite low literacy rates, indicating moderate expectations. Satisfaction with Basic Health Units fell from 44.91% in 2012-13 to 39.78% in 2019-20, reflecting inadequate facilities and resources.
- These issues impacted Balochistan's Human Development Index (HDI), which peaked at 0.464 in 2007 but stagnated for over a decade, with health and education showing significant decline.

## ***How Coalition Governments Undermined Governance and Policy Continuity in Balochistan (2013-23)?***

Interview findings via thematic analysis revealed that coalition regimes in Balochistan in said period had been compromised, uncertain, unstable with fragmented authority. Findings demonstrate investigation of the eleven themes, taken for study, show that coalition partners have hindered development, resulted fluctuated allocations and caused discontinued policies in health and education sectors.



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- ***Fragmented Political Authority:*** This theme identifies that political system of Balochistan is fragmented and structural. Balochistan has never had a single-party majority government. Between 2013–2018 and 2018–2023, highly unstable, multi-party coalitions with veto powers were common.
- ***Policy Discontinuity and Bureaucratic Instability:*** Another theme emerged as policy discontinuity in Balochistan. The coalition governments often experienced uncertain tenures of key bureaucrats, sudden change of ministry and uncertain political situation.
- ***Federal and Military Influence:*** Federal and military influence in the administrative setup also emerged another important finding where it is found Balochistan is one of the key provinces where a hybrid form of regimes have been installed to influence more easily by Islamabad and Rawalpindi.
- ***Politicisation of Public Sector Development Programs (PSDPs):*** Study finds PSDP as the nerve center of coalition politics rather than serving as a development tool, it became an instrument for managing political loyalties.

Study shows that coalition regimes have been more focused to the personal schemes of coalition partners rather than provincial developments. Policies in education and health remained changed with every crisis under coalition governments since Ministers continued to serve as agents rather than serve as popular mandate. For example: policies depended upon the tenure of the related minister, after the change of minister also resulted in the change of policies.

Both coalition regimes from 2013–18 and 2018–23 met with structural problem. The former no doubt, had more political independence, coherence, understanding and less political confrontation, but lacked administrative coherence and was incapacitated by factionalism and divergence of opinion whereas the latter had less political integrity with divergent opinion, were made united under the banner of one political party. However, both coalition government's periods revealed that institutional independence, strong political parties, policy continuity and local empowerment were limited to their respective periods. Therefore, coalition governments struggled to settle the governance challenges in health and education sectors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Results suggest the coalition governments in Balochistan need structured reforms and framework to be more efficient in-service delivery and policy continuity. Without formal governance mechanisms, institutional liberty and accountability means, the governance challenges continue to exist in important sectors like health and education. Balochistan needs a permanent governance model which is transparent, inclusive and public oriented. Adopting institutional mechanisms to



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regulate coalition behaviors in Balochistan, can transfer Balochistan from a crisis-prone government to public service focused regime. Following recommendations are grounded in respondent insights, thematic analysis:

- Establish formal coalition governance frameworks to regulate decision-making and ensure policy continuity.
- Develop a formal framework ensuring that major policy instruments are protected from abrupt political and administrative change.
- Introduce fixed tenures for key bureaucratic positions to safeguard administrative stability and meritocracy.
- Depoliticise PSDP by linking resource allocation to transparent, needs-based development criteria.
- Strengthen provincial autonomy by clarifying federal and military roles in devolved sectors.
- Decentralise authority to districts and communities with strong accountability and transparency mechanisms.
- Promote cross-party oversight and consensus on education and health as non-negotiable development priorities.
- Shift political incentives from patronage to performance by linking legitimacy to service delivery outcomes.