



SBP launches Banking on Equality Policy 2026 re-affirming its commitment to reduce the gender gap in financial inclusion

State Bank of Pakistan has launched the second edition of its Banking on Equality (BoE) Policy that aims to further reduce the gender gap and advance women's financial inclusion in the country. The BoE 2026 is the reflection of SBP's commitment to create an enabling environment where women can thrive to contribute their true potential in the economic development of the country. Powered by digitalization, entrepreneurship and access to finance, the policy is targeting to bring the unbanked into the financial fold.

Women's inclusion in the financial sector is essential for long-term economic prosperity and a key part of SBP's Vision 2028. The previous BoE policy was first of its kind gender mainstreaming initiative in Pakistan that aimed to reduce the growing gender gap in financial inclusion and make the banking industry more women friendly. As a result, overall gender gap in financial inclusion has narrowed from 39 percent in 2021 to 29 percent in 2025. Moreover, during this time, banks have inducted over 17,500 women under the policy, improving the overall ratio of women staff from 13 percent to 17 percent, while dedicated women's financial services departments/teams are in place at banks to develop women centric products and services.

Based on the systematic implementation of BoE Policy since 2021, SBP recently won the prestigious [*Policy Achievement Award for Gender Inclusive Finance*](#) 2026 by Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI).

Now, the BoE 2026 has been introduced which builds upon the earlier policy's progress, with enhanced actions and targets to: i) strengthen women's representation and retention in the financial sector, ii) expand women's digital access to financial services, iii) boost women's entrepreneurship and financial literacy through support hubs, and iv) enhance use of gender disaggregated data for monitoring and outreach.

The new Policy sets targets for women's ratio in hiring, customer outreach, and branchless banking agents. It also advises banks to introduce day care facilities for working mothers, and have career progression policies in place to advance mid-career women into leadership roles.

Furthermore, to improve women's access to financial services, BoE 2026 issues instructions to digitalize women's access to accounts and payment services through targeted digital on-boarding drives, simplified women-centric digital accounts, and promoting digital payments for women-led businesses.

In order to boost financing to women-owned/led micro, small, and medium enterprises, the policy encourages to improve the share of women borrowers across key financing segments. Embedding a gender lens in credit planning, introducing simplified and specialized financing products, leveraging digital platforms and fintech partnerships, and adopting alternate credit assessment and collateral mechanisms are the key features of the Policy to better serve women with limited formal financial history.

Further, the policy also aims to improve women's entrepreneurship and financial literacy to provide a viable pathway for women's participation in financial system. To ensure the policy's smooth



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implementation, SBP will implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, quarterly data reporting, and regular mystery shopping exercises.

The BoE 2026 has been finalized after extensive consultations with international and local stakeholders. The Policy will support the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) goal of narrowing the gender gap in financial inclusion to 25 percent by 2028 and aid in implementation of the World Bank led Women Entrepreneurship (WE) Finance Code initiative.

Through stronger public-private collaboration, enabling women's entrepreneurship, and introducing targeted reforms, BoE Policy 2026 seeks to create a more inclusive financial ecosystem that supports women's economic empowerment and contributes to broader national growth.

For details: https://www.sbp.org.pk/assets/documents/circulars/BoE_2026_Policy_Document.pdf
