

CEF Pakistan

1. The Context

Primary education

Primary education is being imparted through public and private, formal and non-formal schools, Madrassas (religious schools) and literacy centres for the youth.

Brief history education in country

The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan (Article 37-B) and ratification of UN CRC (Article 28), hold the GoP responsible for provision of free and compulsory education. A wide range of problems have plagued the education system, which can broadly be attributed to inequitable trends leading to dualism i.e. English vs. Urdu, public vs. private, textbook board vs. other curricula options and geographic differences that affect quality, access and retention.

Fee structure & state of primary education

Free Primary education has been declared in all the four provinces of Pakistan. Some provide books while some don't. Adoption of initiatives (discussed later) has enhanced enrolment and retention.

In Pakistan there are about 40 million children in the 5-15 age group, the conventional school going age. Education Sector Reforms 2001-04 (ESR) quote gross primary enrolment at 89% and drop out rates at 50%. Thus out of 36 million children enrolled in schools, 18 million dropped out before completing primary education, whereas 4 million had no access to school. Hence of 40 million children, 22 million are out of school.

Challenges faced by the education sector

The political environment seems conducive with facilitating policies, plans and measures initiated by the Government. The portfolio of education ministry going back to the previous Federal Education Minister and the openness to work with CSOs are encouraging signs. However, issues of scarce and competent teaching staff (1 teacher: 48 students), lengthy procedures, under allocation and utilisation of financial resources, less clarity regarding the authority and role of district representatives at the district level, less than favourable attitudes within the provincial governments towards the newly elected district government and the financing gap are still outstanding and need attention. Devolution is an opportunity that needs to be fully explored, and given support in implementation with the involvement of the CSOs. The issue of little or minimal political priority to education is also important to highlight. In fact it can safely be said that it has taken precedence in terms of the dismal situation of education.

Traditionally education planning has been done at provincial and federal levels using a 'top down' approach hence, lacking the capacity to respond to local needs, priorities and problems. Ownership, effective utilisation of funds according to needs, accountability and transparency are missing mainly due to lack of participation of key stakeholders such as the education department, schools, communities, children and civil society organisations. No mechanisms exist to encourage participation in designing, monitoring and implementation of education plans at all three administrative levels i.e. the federal, provincial and district.

Government Education Policy

Government spending on education is 2.4% of the GNP against the required 6% recommended by the Dakar Framework of Action, while the following documents constitute the education development framework:

1. National Education Policy 1998-2010.

2. Education Sector Reforms 2001-2004 → Based on country level consultations with all stakeholders.
3. National Plan of Action for EFA 2001-2015.
4. Interim – Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP).

A general consensus, observed among the masses, is that good policies are in place but implementation and proper utilisation of funds remains a debit. Government's perspective is that enough funds are not available for education while it has been observed that allocations at times go unutilised.

The I-PRSP endorses the fact that education is the most important factor, which distinguishes the poor from the non-poor. The percentage of literate household heads is 27 in poor households, while for non-poor households it is 52 (I-PRSP: 6). Similarly, the ESR Action Plan has been integrated within the I-PRSP with over 50% of the budget being allocated to education. In addition to integrating ESR components of literacy, Universal Primary Education (UPE) and technical education, the I-PRSP's social safety net programmes, such as "Zakat" (financial contributions) for student stipends, school nutrition programmes for girls, and rehabilitation of schools under the Khushal Pakistan Programme all contribute towards the key ESR areas.

The international community is playing a vital role in Education provision in terms of financial and technical assistance for service delivery as well as policy development. Major players include UNESCO, USAID, CIDA, World Bank, DfID, EC and INGOs etc. Other important stakeholders at the national level include the Government (comprising Federal, provincial, district, field level and teaching staff), Donors, Private Institutes, politicians, CSOs, Parents, Children (no involvement in govt policy making, however CSOs have started engaging children) and EFA Forum/School Councils (bright future prospects if implemented meaningfully).

Civil Society

General perception of CSO, in the past, has not been very positive with an element of confrontation with the govt, however the role has changed gradually and they are being accepted as major stakeholders. The CSOs have gone beyond service delivery to policy level consultation in the form of an advisory role.

The civil society in Pakistan are linked to the grassroots. Community based organisations (CBOs) are present at the village level while NGOs act as intermediary organisations which are supported and financed by INGOs, donors and government. NGO representatives are present in advisory and steering committee set-ups for policy analysis. History of CSOs working together has been such that joint efforts have usually been donor driven within which power; control and competition for finances have been experienced. Moreover community level organisations often experience political interference at the community level while most claim to be apolitical.

Experience of working with coalitions has not been very encouraging as they have been functional only as long as the funding and push from the donor existed. One comes across nascent structures here and there but nothing substantial and broad based exists with regards to education. Coalitions engaged in works regarding child labour (CACL) and women issues (AASHA) are in place.

2. CEF Intervention

CEF Activity

For CEF Pakistan, an approach of consultation aimed at enhancing our understanding of education issues combined with research regarding issues affecting

budget allocations and utilisation, and implementation of education plans backed by experience gained from practical initiatives was considered the best way forward.

Priority Area 1

Strategic focus:

Involving civil society organisations in practical initiatives backed by strong and effective alliances and forums at both micro and macro levels would encourage and strengthen decentralised planning and implementation of education plans and frameworks. Government of Pakistan's district devolution plan and promulgation of local government ordinance in August 2000, is a concrete move towards decentralisation of decision making and resources, demonstrating a greater willingness to encourage participation of CSOs and all other key stakeholders in important decisions, which affect them and their future generations.

Objective:

To ensure and promote participation of civil society organisations' (CSOs) in the design and implementation of education policies and frameworks in order to achieve Quality Education for All.

Initiatives:

- Linkages with the government EFA forum to advocate for policy change.
- Demonstration and advocate for adoption of an enhanced version of EMIS, which collects data of all schools as well as that of out of school children as apposed to the government's EMIS that addresses the govt schools only.
- Formation of networks in two provinces.
- Establishment of a teacher's network in selected districts which will be (a) capacitated in joyful learning methodologies and (b) advocate for quality education by highlighting issues and remedies.
- Provision of a platform for structured and ongoing involvement of children in influencing the decision makers in education sector in Pakistan as well as try to bring together the children's voices of other CEF countries on education issues.
- Reviewing education decentralisation process in order to highlight the areas, which need govt's attention in terms of effective implementation of the policies already in place and the gaps that highlights the need for changes in system/procedures at the administrative and management level for ensuring that decentralisation takes place in real sense of the word.

Priority Area 2

Strategic Focus:

To support and promote mechanisms, which would empower communities to track government spending to ensure effective utilisation of available resources and advocate for increase in education budget, where required.

Objectives:

- Increased awareness in communities with regard to financing of education and its place in national planning.
- Government spending on education becomes more responsive to the educational needs in country.

Initiatives:

- Researching financing of education and supporting and promoting mechanisms, which would empower communities to track govt spending to ensure effective utilisation of available resources and advocate for increase in education budget, where required.

Priority Area 3

Strategic Focus:

To contribute in facilitating access to quality basic education for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (including girls, working children and poor children), and promoting innovative ways of improving quality of education (formal, non-formal and public education).

Objectives:

- To facilitate access of vulnerable and disadvantaged children, especially girls to quality basic education by supportive innovative ways initiated by CSOs.
- The dropout rate, which is presently very high, especially for girls, is reduced.
- Human rights values and a culture of democracy is promoted in school.

Initiatives:

- Strengthening existing schools of a selected area by making education more relevant to community's needs by building skills of reading, writing and numeracy yet expanding its portfolio, involving the community livelihood education.
- Supporting and documenting Khoj's innovative methodology, based on phonetics, and advocating for its adoption.
- Researching and documenting innovative practices.

The way forward:

The missing link has been establishment of a broad based national coalition and an adequately funded clear advocacy strategy which will be worked upon in the coming weeks.

CEF Pakistan Structure

