



Pakistan

Country Context

In Pakistan there are about 40 million children of conventional school going age (5-15). Gross primary enrolment is 89% and primary level drop out rate is 50% (Education Sector Reforms 2001-04). Thus of 36 million children enrolled in schools, 18 million dropped out before completing primary. The 18 million dropouts plus the 4 million with no access to school add up to 22 million out of school (of the 40 million who should be attending). Since the formal education system does not efficiently cater to the most disadvantaged groups of children: working children; children with disabilities; children from the poorest families; and particularly girls, large numbers are either out of school or semi-literate leading to very low enrolment and completion of primary level and consequently an increase in child labour (formal and informal sector) and street children. Most of the girls are engaged in domestic work and informal economic activities.

A wide range of problems plague education in Pakistan 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 urban vs. rural etc. This results in a minority of children having access to quality education and the vast majority being deprived. At the local level, poor physical conditions of schools, shortage of teachers, poor teaching and assessment methods, teacher absenteeism, unproductive teacher training, teachers attitude and harsh behaviour toward children, and low levels of community participation all contribute in driving children away from schools. At the District level, performance of education departments is dismal because of a weak information base, lack of basic facilities, weak understanding of basic issues, a virtually non-existent monitoring and support system, and top down bureaucratic administrative and management practices. Politically appointed teachers, many with questionable academic credentials, effectively prevent any attempt at school improvement. Distribution of resources is often arbitrary and therefore uneven. At the national level, resource allocation and disbursement before the promulgation of District Devolution Plans has traditionally been top down and intermittent. Education is neither related to human resource development nor to market needs and economic development.

The President approved the 2001 Education Sector Reforms (ESR), which is an action plan seeking to implement the National Education Policy in order to achieve the targets set in Dakar and in the draft National Plan of Action. The ESRs follow a sector wide approach and its 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, 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 National Plan of Action for EFA (2000-2015), recently finalized, has poverty reduction as a core objective. In achieving the above, Civil Society Organisations are seen as a strategic partner to improve access, quality, monitor budget spending and school performance and in some cases build capacity of School Councils, and to support low cost community based construction and repairs.

Key Achievements

- Supporting social mobilisation through forming community groups for quality EFA, and advocacy.
- Supporting the formation of Pakistan Coalition for Education.
- Providing funding for research studies on Primary Education and Funding in Pakistan and the Status of Primary Education after Devolution.
- Initiating education budget tracking through support to School Management Committees.

Breakdown by Criteria

CRITERION 1

Using Global Week of Action (GWA) on Education 2004 as a platform, CEF brought together 25 organisations across Pakistan at local and national level. This was followed by a marathon round of provincial meetings culminating in a National level Consultative meeting in February 2005. As a result, Pakistan Coalition for Education was formed and a vision and mission identified. A good mix of NGOs has joined the coalition bringing their experience and reputation for working at community level. Research based advocacy has been selected as a main vehicle for lobbying and influencing policy makers, and the geographic coverage of the coalition will facilitate timely access to relevant data. Currently in Punjab, a basic mapping out of coalition members' focus and area of operations is being done. GWA is again being used as a launching pad for the coalition, which has been approached by other donors offering their support.

Rich data drawn from a similar coalition building exercise in 2002-03 would have served as a useful reference point but was not used. As before, most of the members of the coalition are NGOs and have experience predominantly in service delivery. While this is needed for social mobilisation, it also implies that their expertise in advocacy, research and lobbying is limited. The challenge remains to act on learning that has taken place. Last year, during the GWA, almost 8,000 children were brought together and politicians also made commitments to improve schools, however there were no mechanisms to examine post GWA situation of schools in terms of students' participation rates or improvement in physical conditions.

Key recommendations from the Pakistan MTR include:

Secretariat:

- Provide continuous and focussed input to coalition members with regard to implementation and M&E framework development.

- Ensure capacity building of PCE members especially with regard to advocacy, research and budget tracking.

Management Committee:

- Ensure that PCE's overall direction and framework matches CEF's philosophy.
- Ensure that PCE has space required for making contextualised and independent decisions.

CRITERION 2

Two reports have been produced on Primary Education and Funding in Pakistan in addition to a manual for budget tracking for School Management Committees. However accessing information has proved difficult at district level. One of CEF's partners has used its valuable experience and contacts to work towards reducing financial bottlenecks by focusing on high-level officials. One of the big challenges facing the programme in Pakistan is the variance of SMC capacities, ordinances and powers within and across districts and provinces. In addition it is important for CEF to use the empirical evidence from several existing areas of research.

CRITERION 3

CEF undertook 12 months partnership with 4 local NGOs who first created innovative and inclusive models for marginalised children and community groups. As a second step, these NGOs widely disseminated their learning for bringing about policy changes especially at grass-roots level. The approach, though synchronised with Pakistani culture and context, did collide with CEF's mandate of not supporting service delivery initiatives. Currently, there seems to be a catch 22 situation, as supporting the development of innovative approaches invariably leads to supporting service delivery of those innovations. This is a distinct challenge for the future.

Case Study: Raising awareness

One of CEF's implementing partners, the Adult Basic Education Society (ABES), has successfully involved children in advocacy in two districts. Through forming student clubs in the villages, students are first familiarised with different themes and educational issues. Later on, students engage parents and other community members through role playing, street theatres, for raising awareness. Similar initiatives were undertaken in 40 schools across 20 villages bringing parents, students, and government officials onto the same platform with children taking a central role. In ABES experience, such activities not only restore school attendance and participation rates but also create trust amongst the key stakeholders, lack of which results in drop outs, under spending of school budgets, poor information about school needs, and unplanned allocations at district and taluka level.

Another success story of CEF's support is the development of indigenous material for raising awareness and capacity building on a range of issues including innovative and joyful teaching practices, female access to education and women's rights and place in Pakistani Law. Prime indicators of the relevance and effectiveness of these materials are the numerous requests made by Education Departments, other NGOs and district governments for sharing and training their staff on the use of this material. ABES is continuing to use the material in its own training along with its dissemination across public, private and NGO sectors in the country.