

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Government/Community Partnership



Report by:

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Visit to Pakistan, 10th – 26th February 2012.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Our special thanks go to the Minister of Education (Schools) for the AJK Government, the Honourable Mian Abdul Waheed who kindly received us at the Kashmir House at Islamabad and directed the District Education Officers (DEOs) for Mirpur (AJK) and their teams to facilitate visits to schools in the Dadyaal area. We are hence grateful to Mr. Abdul Bari, the DEO for Boys Schools (Mirpur) and his counterpart Mohtrama Kauser Manzoor DEO for Girls Schools (Mirpur), for facilitating our visits so efficiently and diligently.



(Minister of Education (Schools) AJK Government, the Honourable Mian Abdul Waheed with members of the delegation, Ejaz Noori, Mr Abdul Bari, Manzoor Kauser and Ghafoor Qureshi outside the Kashmir House in Islamabad.)

Our profoundest appreciation also goes to the head teachers and staff of the Pilot Government School in Dadyaal, Government Primary Schools (boys & girls) in Bhalote, and the Government Middle school in Batroei.



(Members of the delegations with Mohtarama Manzoor Kauser (DEO) at Government Primary School (boys & girls) in Bhalote, Dadyaal)



(Members of the delegation with Mr Abdul Bari planting a tree at Pilot Government High School- Dadyaal)



(Members of the delegation at Government Middle school, Batroei, Dadyaal)



Our thanks also go to Dr.Christine Amjad-Ali, the director of Christian Studies Centre Rawalpindi and her very able team for welcoming us and arranging our visits to the Presentation Convent School, St. Joseph Primary School, and Saint Pauls School in Rawalpindi. Here our heartfelt thanks also go to Christopher Sharaf for a warm welcome and for making all these arrangements possible.

(Dr. Christine Amjad-Ali, Director of Christian Study Centre)

Whilst in Rawalpindi, we were privileged to have a short but highly constructive meeting with Qazi Zahoor sahib, the District Education Officer (DEO) for Rawalpindi. Under his guidance, we were able to observe the recruitment process for teachers for government schools in the district. This brief interaction was most informative and instructive.

(Members of delegation with Qazi Zahoor sahib (DEO) and Choudhary Zafar Pagara)



We also wish to place on record our appreciation for Choudhary Khalid Bhalote, the new Administrator for Dadyaal, for kindly receiving us in his office at very short notice. Khalid has been newly appointed to the role from Bradford, United Kingdom, and he brings to the position a fresh approach. His appointment underlines the closeness of links between Pakistani/ Kashmiri community in the UK and Pakistan/ AJK.

(Members of the delegation and Mr Abdul Bari with the Choudhary Khalid Bhalote, Administrator for Dadyaal)

We are deeply indebted to Mr. Ejaz Noori, Chairman of Pakistan Council for Social Welfare & Human Rights, and , Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Qureshi , the former P.A and support to Sardar Abdul Qayum, the former President of AJK, for their support, guidance and being so forthcoming to facilitate the visits and the contacts. Thank you. We are equally thankful to Choudhary Mohammed Aslam and the staff of Jabbar Girls High School for welcoming us twice to the school to learn from a successful community/ government partnership in an educationally deprived area. For the second visit, we were accompanied by the respected Abdul Bari and his team from Mirpur and Dadyaal.

(Members of the delegation with Choudhary Mohammed Aslam Chair of Trustees)



Accompanied by Abdul Bari and his team, we had the benefit of a visit to the Kashmir Education Foundation (KEF), College of Teachers Training (CTT). At the college we were welcomed and received by Mr. Asif Habib Khan one of the trustees of KEF and Ms Sarah S. Khan, the principal of the college. The visit proved to be thoroughly beneficial and will hopefully serve to improve links between the college, schools & educational authorities in AJK.

(Members of the delegation received by Mr. Asif Habib Khan, a trusty of KEF.)

It was also a privilege to meet Dr. Aisath Shehenaz Adam, the High Commissioner for the Republic of Maldives in Pakistan. Instigated by Ejaz Noori, the visit was a pleasant and most welcomed surprise. We were received warmly and courteously. Most of us had very little knowledge of the Republic and therefore learned a great deal. Thank you.

(Members of the delegation with Dr. Aisath Shehnaz Adam, the High Commissioner of Maldives in Pakistan)



Our gratitude also goes to Shahid Raja, a former director of the Huddersfield Pakistani Community Alliance (UK) and presently settled in Pakistan, for inviting us to deliver a seminar for students at the FG Postgraduate College of Commerce in Islamabad. This was a thoroughly enjoyable experience for us and we pray that it was of some value to the students at the college.

(Mr Shahid Raja a former director of HPCA (NGO) and presently lecturing in universities in Islamabad, Pakistan)

During our Rawalpindi stay, we had the privilege of meeting Choudhary Israr UI Haq, the chairman of SUKHI, an NGO that is committed to making a lasting quality difference to some of the poorer and disadvantaged communities. We felt inspired listening to him about some of the life enhancing projects the organisation has pioneered in some of the most deprived areas of Pakistan.

Finally, we would wish to record our appreciation to Qazi Shahid Iqbal, Pervez Ahmed and Hafiz Zaheer Abbas for assisting us with their helpful suggestions and guidance.

THE VISITING TEAM COMPRISED OF:

ISHTIAQ AHMED:

Council for Mosques lead officer/Press officer on interfaith relations. A founding member of the Interfaith UK, Muslim Council of Britain, with a keen interest in the role of education in supporting interfaith relations. Mr. Ahmed is also responsible for a number of publications for example 'Call For Engagement' which looks at developing role of Mosques and faith schools within the British society and also the history of the Council for Mosques published on the 30th anniversary of the organisation. He presently combines his role with Bradford Council for Mosques with that of a senior policy advisor for Huddersfield Pakistani Community Alliance (www.hpca.org.uk) and United Huddersfield.

MUMTAZ ALI:

Specialist in youth engagement strategies, over the last 10 years he has developed a number of youth leadership programme's across different religious and cultural groups in the area. Some of the leadership programmes developed by Mr. Ali are taken as good practice guides by other towns and cities with diverse communities. He also has keen interest in the education and is one of the directors on Kashmir Education Foundation in the UK, which has a number of high quality schools and a Teacher Training Centre in Pakistan/Kashmir. Mr. Ali is also a director of North Huddersfield Trust School in UK and a founding member of the Huddersfield Pakistani Community Alliance / Pakistani Youth Forum (www.hpca.org.uk), and a founding member of the United Huddersfield (www.unitedhuddersfield.org) which was established to support the relief work following the recent floods in Pakistan. United Huddersfield has contributed to the restoration of a mixed faith Muslim/Christian village in Goth Shah Naser, Sindh. In partnership with Muslim Hands and Christian Aid see www.unitedhuddersfield.org

SOFIA BUNCY:

Sofia Buncy has a double graduation in Psychology and Youth & Community Development. She is presently heading a youth leadership programme aimed at young Pakistani British people from the deprived and socially vulnerable homes funded by the Joseph Rowntree Trust. Over the last 7 years she has been a foremost activist on human/civil right issues with a particular focus on domestic violence and arranged marriages. Sofia is currently part of a national advisory group on divorce, domestic violence and arranged marriages.

FOZIA LATIF:

Fozia has her first Degree in Art and is presently studying for Youth & Community Development; her interest is also art in education. She has an active role in the National Advisory group on women's rights, with particular emphasis on the rights of Muslim women regarding arranged marriages, domestic violence, divorce and inheritance.

SAMIYAH ISLAM ALI:

Samiyah is studying to become a Dental Hygienist/Therapist. She is also the co- chairperson of the Pakistani Youth Forum's young women's group and a founder member of the Young Ethical Pioneers (www.youngpioneers.org.uk), a group of young people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds working together to develop an ethical social enterprise model.

All four members have a strong interest and involvement in education.

THE AIM OF THE VISIT WAS TO:

1. To study the primary and secondary schooling setup in Pakistan and AJK.
2. To explore potentials for Government/ community partnership in education.
3. To study the impact of private primary and secondary schools on education.
4. To explore possibilities for mutually reciprocal linkages between schools in United Kingdom & Pakistan/ AJK.

RATIONAL AND MOTIVATION FOR THE VISIT.

There are over 1.2 million people of Pakistani/Kashmiri origin in the United Kingdom. Although, into its fourth generation development, the community continues to value and retain close ties with their mother country through regular family visits, property and business investment, political ties, charity and welfare work with emphasis on health and education. One comes across many examples of project collaboration as one travels through Punjab and Azad Jammu & Kashmir regions. These examples are equally visible in other parts of Pakistan from which the Pakistani community has emigrated from. The regular and frequent visits of notable political figures and Government officials further goes to underline the close connections that exist between the two communities and the nations.

Against this backdrop, there is a strong case for fostering and strengthening of mutually reciprocal links between the two divides. In this context, education can serve to be a useful bridge for a number of reasons:

1. The close family connections that communities in both countries have.
2. The desire of the UK based community to strengthen and sustain links with their mother country and a reciprocal education partnership at school level would be a useful way for children to acquire greater understanding and appreciation of two cultures. In the UK, this is not only important for children of Pakistani/ Kashmiri origin but also their counter parts from the indigenous community. It will help to engender respect for each other's roots and norms.
3. Changes in UK immigration rules require dependants and spouses coming into UK to be more educationally equipped prior to entry. Marriage continues to serve family unity and togetherness. A greater awareness on the part of schools in Pakistan of the needs and requirements of potential migrants to UK will enable them to be better prepared for the life in UK.
4. Increasing number of British Pakistani/Kashmiri parent's desire their children to receive some basic education in Pakistan/Kashmir as part of their schooling life in order to strengthen their identity and cultural links. However, parents fear that any amount of time in Pakistan/Kashmir will hold their children back educationally and they will not be able to compete on their return. By supporting schools in Pakistan/Kashmir through better links with schools in the UK and through community partnership, the opportunity is there for schools in Pakistan/Kashmir to have better appreciation of the needs of children from the UK and understanding of the parental fear. This will enable them to adapt, be more creative and be more focused on catering for the needs of children from UK.
5. For most Pakistani/ Kashmiri parents in the UK, many second and third generation, the school setup in Pakistan/Kashmir appears to be confused and unwieldy without any real purpose or vision. Lack of proper guidance, control, and scrutiny has seriously compromised quality and standards. To an unfamiliar and untrained eye, these negative perceptions are a major deterrent. These need to be addressed.

PRIVATE EDUCATION VS STATE EDUCATION: OBSERVATION

We are seeing an unchecked growth in the private schooling sector. What started as an urban movement is quickly spreading to the rural areas. There is a growing appetite for education amongst parents. They see education as a root out of poverty and a way to secure the future of their children. The state schooling sector is failing to cater for the high expectations of the parents and the students locally and globally. Lack of proper planning and investment has pushed the Government schools way back in the pegging. The standards are inconsistent and vary enormously from a school to school and from a locality to locality. Basic facilities and resources are poor. The private sector has ceased upon this opportunity. Private schools are mushrooming and multiplying at a rapid pace. There appears to be an unhealthy and unholy competition to lure students. All kind of disguises and incentives are being presented to attract paying students.

The private paying schools in Pakistan are not a new phenomenon. There always have been and there always will be a role and place for private paid education. The disturbing thing is the unchecked scale and the pace of the growth at the expense of the state sector without proper planning and monitoring to ensure consistency of standards, quality and a united vision for the future generations of the country. There is a definite push towards the private sector and it is primarily profit motivated. We also know that there is a general apathy with the Government schooling system and this is contributing to the growing support for the private sector. We were alarmed to hear a senior Government employed educationalist speaking so glowingly about the prospects of the private sector whilst pessimistically dismissing the role and prospects of state education.

METHODOLOGY

During our quick and short visit we were able to visit a number of different types of schools: State, Church, private, and community schools. We were also able to speak to and hear government educationalists, headteacher, teachers, parents and community activists in and around Rawalpindi and Dadyaal.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The prime responsibility for providing free, accessible and high quality education for children of the nation has to be the responsibility of the Government. This responsibility should not be diluted or its role under estimated and belittled. This is the expectations of the parents and wider community. The only reason they go else where if their aspirations are not met.
2. However, we also know that Pakistan/ AJK Governments do not have sufficient resources to provide a uniform access to a high quality free education for all for a foreseeable future. This is not to say that it would not or could not in the future but that time is at a considerable distance and would require a sustained resources, planning and effort on part of the Government and its partners.
3. There always will be space and place for the private sector to deliver paid high quality education for the children's of the nation. There is a well established practice of private paid schooling in the country although quality and standard greatly vary from a school to school. In many cases level of fees levied on students do not reflect the quality and standard of education and amenities. Many private schools which do not meet the par in terms of quality, standards and Government vision. There is an urgent need for the Government to raise the bar for quality and educational standards. The private sector needs to be brought in line to complement and supplement Government goals for education.
4. We had an opportunity to visit a number of government primary, middle and high schools. We were impressed by the dedication of teaching staff. We were equally impressed by the quality of pupils and their love for education. Here, teachers and students were held back by lack of proper teaching amenities and resources. It was sad to see students having to sit on floor without chairs and desks not to mention poor or non existents science, IT, washing and playing facilities. Poor up-keep of buildings and other amenities did not contribute to creating a conducive and welcoming learning environment.
5. Government schools do not appear to have a clear, uniform, and sustained policy for community engagement in the life of School. There doesn't appear to be any organised space in the schooling timetable for such things as parent's day and community events. Schools seem to operate at a distance from their communities. Schools do not connect with their local communities and therefore their value to the community is not appreciated/owned.

THREE SCENARIOS AND THREE MODELS OF PRACTICE:

PRESENTATION CONVENT SCHOOL:

This is one of the oldest convent schools in the country, established in 1895 for the Christian children and sons and daughters of British Army personnel. At the present, the school has 50 % Muslim and 50% Christian children.



Members of the delegation with Principal Sister Julie Watson and students of the Presentation Convent School, Rawalpindi

Some of the most notable Pakistani women that have benefited from the high quality education of the school include **Benazir Bhutto, Nilofar Bakhtiar and Melia Lodhi**.

The school offers education from prep to high. It is a paid school with an average fee of about 1500 rupees per month. The children from the poorer families are subsidised.

The school takes pride in providing a high quality education, preparing children for high profile and responsible roles in the society with a set of values around: **Loyalty, freedom, sacrifice, justice, kindness, charity, honesty, hard work, cleanliness, patience, faith and unity**.

The school operates a proactive policy of parental involvement in the child's life and school.

We do not see these values visible in much of the private and Government schools.

What the school offers is a model of high quality education at an affordable price with a clear vision.

JABBER GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL- GUJAR KHAN

This is an all girl's High School in an educationally deprived area. The initiative was started by the local community pushed by no education for girls beyond primary within the radius of 20 kilometres. Girls in the area had no progression route to middle and higher education. Many parents had no viable incentive for sending their daughters to a school, e. 'What's the point, if she is going to be sitting home after her primary school' a kind of view that was taken by most parents.



(Members of delegation with staff and students)

The local community set about upgrading their existing primary school. The land, 30 kanaals in size, was donated by the local owners and transferred to the Government for the purpose. An application was made to the Government to upgrade the school from Primary to middle and then to high. The Government encouraged by the community desire and commitment levered in funds to support the project. As a result of this partnership, 26 high standard class rooms were built, a building for a school library and the IT suite has been completed and the science laboratory is nearing completion. The Government has matched the community's efforts rupee to rupee.

Initially, the staff salaries were paid by the Government, Best Way Foundation and the local community with sponsorship from the UK. Most of the teaching staff has now been integrated into the Government's recruitment with a small number of teachers being funded by the Best Way foundation.

The next phase of the school expansion is developing the outer area for playing fields as a requirement for a degree college.

540 girls are receiving education from primary to High. Education is free with some help with uniforms and text books for girls from poorer families.

The school has an active policy of community and parental involvement. For example, at the last parents meeting around 300 mothers attended to receive educational progress report.

The school offers a most potent example and model of Government / Community partnership.

THE KEF COLLEGE OF TEACHER TRAINING (CTT) AND SCHOOL AT PAKWAAL RAWALPINDI

Kashmir Education Foundation is a community Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) registered in Pakistan and the UK. The aim of the Foundation is to provide high quality education facilities to educationally inclined children from the poorer rural communities. The emphasis is to provide children with a strong broadly based educational foundation giving them a competitive edge to excel and to compete with some of the best private educational institute in the country.



KEF has utilised its link with organisations/school abroad. Although this is an independent NGO, KEF works closely with the government drawing on governments support and guidance. KEF has established 3 schools and is nearing the completion of the fourth school. In its aspiration to deliver quality education KEF encountered difficulties in recruitment of well trained teachers, in Pakistan we have observed that too much emphasis is given to formal qualifications i.e BA and MA's and not sufficient to teacher training qualifications and skills. In order to address this gap KEF established a high quality Teachers Training facility at Pokhwaal for teachers for KEF school and schools in general.

Lessons learnt was that an independent NGO taking initiative to deliver a high quality provision with government blessing, mobilising resources from the business and general public locally and internationally.

Above are the three models of good practice that we were able to look at during our short visit and we are certain that there are many others. The above examples high light 3 key factors:

- 1. It is very much possible to deliver a high quality affordable education in Pakistan/Kashmir, applying a combination of various models.***
- 2. There are already excellent examples of government and community partnerships which compliment and add values to government's educational delivery.***
- 3. There is a great deal of scope for the Government/ NGO partnership for delivering high quality education/training provision.***

FINAL CONCLUSION:

We are very impressed by the desire of parents for their children to receive a high quality education. We are also impressed by the dedication of the teachers who are often working in a very difficult situation to deliver any form of education. We are equally aware that there is no shortage of talent amongst the nation's children. We also know that there is the will and commitment on the part of the government to make a quality difference in education and young people's lives.

What is stopping us to move forward is lack of vision, material resources, proper planning and scrutiny. After all, the government has finite resources to support sustained development of education in Pakistan/AJK. Hence, it makes sense to explore potential partnership work with NGO's and the community to mobilise additional resources which compliment and supplement government school education. This approach could entail:

1. A school that offers an element of paid and free schooling
2. An NGO and government working in partnership with NGO mobilising additional resources to upgrade existing school facilities.
3. A fully paid affordable school managed by an NGO within the guidelines which compliments governments vision for providing high quality affordable education for all.

We believe It is possible to have a model of delivery which draws on all of the above three elements.

WAY FORWARD:

As a way forward, we feel the solution to developing a successful schooling model would need to incorporate the above three elements mentioned. Also, a school that offers a standard of education which caters for the educational needs of children visiting/returning from UK/abroad to the area. We fully recognise the importance of adopting a deliverable model. We are keen to show tangible results within an agreed time scale. This is very important for embedding confidence in the partnership and showcasing to the local community tangible difference being made in their neighbourhood. Therefore, any mutually beneficial joint working arrangements need to incorporate:

For the AJK Government:

- The government needs to retain its existing commitment, financial or otherwise, to a school selected for a pilot project.
- Allow a free hand to the NGO to mobilise additional resources for the upgrading of facilities and amenities of a selected school.
- Agree to a Memorandum of Understanding / Contract which defines and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of each partner.
- Works with the NGO to bring in additional resources.
- Helps to remove the artificial bureaucratic hurdles.
- Designates a link officer for the project.

For the HPCA (NGO):

- The NGO will devise and implement a programme of development with clear mile stones/time scales for upgrading of the facility and education therein.
- The NGO will mobilise additional resources for upgrading the facilities.
- The NGO will look at the existing curriculum and add value to it so that the children are meeting government objectives with an additionality.
- The NGO, where appropriate and necessary, will provide 'in-service' teachers training.
- The NGO will also put in place infrastructure for community involvement/ownership of the school, so the school becomes embedded in the lives of the local community and its presence/importance is valued.

We hope that this brief report clarifies our vision and puts forward a frame work for joint working between HPCA (NGO) and the government of AJK. The report also alludes to a number of other pertinent issues and concerns which require an urgent debate and a long term strategic approach on the part of the government if Pakistan/Kashmir is to achieve educational parity with other nations of the world.