Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Support to National Capacity Building to Realize Girls' Right to Education Programme (GREP) in Pakistan

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Pakistan

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

☑ Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools

☐ Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development

☐ Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession

☐ Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation

☐ Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

   UNESCO and Civil Society Organizations in collaboration with Federal and Provincial/ area Education Departments

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

   Support to Government's efforts in increasing access and improving the quality of Girls' Primary Education through targeted interventions both at institutional and community levels.

6. What makes it a best practice? *

   The programme focused on Girls' Education in most marginalized and isolated parts of the country. It is a holistic programme catering to both demand and supply sides of the education system. It has strong partnership with government counterparts and women leadership is at the heart of the programme.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)
   This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:
   i) Which population was affected?
   ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
   iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

The education sector in Pakistan faces twin challenges of low enrolment and early dropouts combined with low quality of learning for those who attend school. There are 22.8 million children in the country who do not have access to any educational facilities with more than half of them being girls. Particularly, girls in rural areas remain a vulnerable group affected by socio-cultural beliefs and practices interfaced with insufficient investment in education and related facilities. Patriarchy and parents' preference for educating a male child combined with parental perceptions of the better opportunity costs of investing in girls' education is a major risk for girls' education. The girls involvement in household chores, and home-based work often remains a major barrier towards achieving gender parity and equality in rural parts the country. Poverty and parents' perception of girls' role as caregiver further minimizes their chances of access and schools and education.

Accessibility and non-availability of basic facilities in schools discourage most of the parents for sending their daughters to schools. Generally, there are less number of girls' schools in the country as compared to boys' schools and the number further goes down at lower secondary and secondary level, which restrains girls' access to education who make half of the population of the country. Lack of proper classrooms and WASH facilities in most of the girls' schools are common both primary and secondary level. In addition, lack of teachers' capacity and their understanding of the curriculum impact students' motivation to stay in schools. The traditional teaching and learning practices coupled with lack of resource materials in schools also contributing to poor learning outcomes do not encourage parents to send their daughters to school.

Keeping in view the peculiarity of the situation, the Government funded Girls Right to Education Programme (GREP) in Pakistan used a holistic approach of working on both demand and supply side of education to improve access, retention, and quality of primary education in 18 marginalised districts. The programme interventions not only helped mobilized local demand for education in most marginalized and isolated areas of the country. But also ensured engagement of the government stakeholders to work on supply side of girls education to absorb the additional demand for enrolment. The three project components: (a) improving access through social mobilization and advocacy, (b) improving retention through improvement in school physical and learning environments, and (c) capacity building of education officials at district and provincial levels helped create an enabling environment for enrolment and retention of Out of Primary School Girls (OoPSG). Although the programme implementation methodology was based on the said three inter-related and interconnected components, they were highly contextualized in accordance with the local context and flexible to school academic cycle to cater to the maximum number of OoPSG.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

i) What are the main activities carried out?

ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?

iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?

iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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UNESCO and Government of Pakistan launched a flagship programme called Girls' Right to Education Programme (GREP) in Pakistan under the Malala Funds-in-Trust framework back in 2014. With initial funding allocated by the Government of Pakistan (GoP), the programme started operations in 13 most marginalized and isolated districts across the four provinces and areas of the country. Started with the GoP funding of USD 7 million, the existing programme portfolio is over USD 20 million. The additional funding mobilized from different donors including Educate A Child, Korea International Cooperation Agency, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Volvo Group Middle East helped expand the programme geographical and programmatic coverage in the country - currently operational in 18 districts.

The programme implementation is carried out through local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as implementation partners selected through a competitive bidding process in consultation with national and provincial/ area education departments. The programme has a well-defined oversight mechanism at multiple tiers led by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT) and Provincial/ Area Education Departments. The programme has established a wide network of development partners, local partner organizations, communities, religious leaders, School Management Committees (SMCs), teachers, community support groups and youth clubs.

Cognizant to socio-cultural dynamic and local context of the target areas, the programme followed a participatory approach to identify the barriers for girls' education and find plausible solutions for long-term effect and sustainability of the programme. Strategies, such as involvement of religious leaders to highlight Islamic perspective of girls' education, Quranic verses, and Hadiths supportive of girls' education, use of print and electronic media, focused group discussions and community sessions was used to sensitize local communities and create a supportive environment for girls' education in the target areas.

Community-based school management system are established in each school. The SMCs received training focusing on the role of SMC in development and execution of School Development Plan (SDP) and proper utilization of school fund received from the government. School infrastructure specially availability of clean drinking water and WASH facilities were improved through provision of seed money provided to SMC for use on self-help basis..

To improve teachers' knowledge of educational concepts, and enhance their pedagogical proficiencies, training on various teaching methodologies including Multi-Grade Teaching (MGT), Activity Based Learning (ABL), cooperative learning, formative and summative assessments, lesson planning around multiple intelligence were organized both at cluster and school level followed by classroom based mentoring and coaching support. Trainings are supplemented with provision of interactive teaching aids and reading materials to engage students in meaningful

activities in schools. Curricular and co-curriculars, specially art and sport-base activities are regular features of the programme to enhance students' creativity, their critical thinking and problem- solving and life skills.

Capacity development interventions for education departments often focus on training contents and activities that help increase girls' retention and completion of primary education. District education officials are provided with opportunities to design, implement, and monitor education strategies that enhance girls' experience in schools by engaging them more fully in their education and in improving their learning.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)
   To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:
   i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
   ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
   iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

Over the past six years of implementation, the programme has produced tangible results in improving girls' access and quality of education, while working with most marginalized and neglected communities. With an initial target of enrolling 40,000 Out of Primary School Girls (OOPSGs) in 304 government girls' primary schools, 65,213 OOPSGs were enrolled, while 66,877 Out of School Boys (OOSBs) indirectly benefited from the programme interventions and admitted in schools in the target districts. The programme outreach expanded exponentially from 304 to over 3,000 government primary schools (girls, boys and mixed) during the last six years of implementation owning to the additional funding contributed by other donors. Retention rate of girls remained an important indicator to gauge the programme performance. With the initial girls' retention rate of 55% (less than the national rate of 67%) in the target areas, it has reached to 62% by end of 2021. The retention was however affected in the target schools mostly during the COVID-19 period.

The programme has made a significant contribution in modifying conventional behaviours of parents and local communities in support of girl's education, which is manifested in the form of increased girls' enrolment in programme areas. There were multiple challenges varying from district to district , which have been addressed through a well-orchestrated, context specific implementation strategy.

Implemented in collaboration with education departments at federal and provincial level, the programme has been able to establish a strong ownership both at the national and provincial level. The programme oversight mechanism at national and provincial level regularly reviewed the implementation progress and made revisions for mid-course correction in areas which needed attention. The provincial/ area committee formed at province and area level regularly monitor the programme progress and provide support for improvement. The district education officers who took part in the capacity building programmes worked as a catalyst to create ownership of the programme at district and area levels. The officials monitored the teaching and learning processes in school and provided mentoring support for teachers.

The programme has established a wide network of local partner organizations, communities, religious leaders, SMCs, teachers, students, mother/ father support groups and youth clubs. Sustained working with these local institutions and voluntary bodies helped transform the community perception and mind-set towards girls' education, while generated a momentum for enrolment of girls in target areas.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)
    To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:
    i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
    ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
    iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

Fostering alliances and partnerships with local change agents, especially village influential and religious leaders, helped transform community attitudes and behaviours. Building alliances with strategic stakeholders who have a direct influence on local communities goes a long way in achieving programme results. For instance, partnership with religious leaders and Imams (head of mosque) in Kohistan district significantly helped in increasing girl enrolment in the target areas.

Engagement and follow-up with government counterparts led to government ownership and commitment to the programme results. Education officials are mostly preoccupied with their routine work responsibilities. Keeping a regular liaison with focal persons in government ministries and departments, updating them on implementation progress and inviting them to important programme activities, field missions and events result in greater ownership and commitment of government officials.

Experiential learning serves as window of change. Bringing together provincial education officials from different provinces and districts is a unique experience for learning and cross-fertilization of knowledge. Even though socio-economic and geographical contexts vary, an important lesson learned from the capacity development programme of government officials is that there were good opportunities to learn from each other. Taking officials on training and exposure visits to other provinces helped replicate good practices. Orientation of education officials on programme implementation methodologies and expected results helped in creating a conducive environment for both government officials and communities for working together for the promotion of girls' education.

Working with both formal and non-formal education at primary helped enhance girls' access to education. The public sector is reluctant to enrol OOSC in different grades due various reasons including age appropriateness, required learning competencies at certain grades, capacities of teachers to deal with differentiate learning needs and availability of physical resources in schools. Therefore, working with non-formal sector along with formal education helped deal with out of school children in the country. Accelerated learning pathways with trained teachers helped students to achieve their desired learning competencies who then can be mainstreamed in formal education system.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice". What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

GREP catered to the need of the most deserving and marginalized segment of the society specially girls living in rural and bordering part of the country. By using a participatory and holistic approach of school improvement, the programme was able to create supporting environment for girls' education both at school and community level.

Realizing the lack of participation of girls and women at leadership and decision-making process, capacity building of the key stakeholders including girls, teachers, mothers, SMC members and district education officials remained a major element of the programme to prepare local girls and women leaders. Dedicated interventions, such a formation of girls' clubs, school-based mentors, inclusion of girls in SMC meetings and preparation of school development plans worked as catalyst to unleash the hidden potentials of young girls to become a true leader in their school communities.

The programme has made substantive progress in terms of girls' enrolment, however, there is need to work on improving both school physical and learning environment on continuously to ensure that girls stay in schools and avail quality education. Nevertheless, educational interventions take time to bring attitudinal and institutional change within the system, demand long-term commitment coupled with sound investment. Based on our observations during the GREP implementation, the need is been felt to work on both formal and non-formal sector of education and use innovative strategies to ensure girls' access to education, especially in rural and hard to reach areas of the country.

Keeping in view the contextual realities and needs, careful assessment of community and school needs and involvement of all stakeholders in all planned interventions ios critical for replicating the GREP model in any other context.

12. Further reading

   Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the "best practice" for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

   The video (https://youtu.be/hqETVsSQcwM) is developed to document, through high quality and high-resolution images, GREP's interventions, activities, events, and other project sites as deemed necessary in the target communities/ locations.

   Video from project areas to capture the progress and achievements. These province specific videos highlight programme progress and its impact on the quality of education.
   Education is Light (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) https://youtu.be/b56AorXLo78
   A Symbol of Hope (Islamabad Capital Territory) https://youtu.be/u88dlJyvkKk
   Hope Returns (Ex-FATA) https://youtu.be/ZPV_2Yh8nvl
   Against all Odds (Punjab) https://youtu.be/N4q8eGnAM2g
   Education Empowers (Balochistan) https://youtu.be/Vc2Lzu37Q5Q
   A Passion for Change (Sindh) https://youtu.be/YCSb-IbBlmA
   A Beacon of Light (Gilgit-Baltistan) https://youtu.be/MG_nq4TBSrQ
   Reaching Out (Pakistan Administered Kashmir) https://youtu.be/-HA_ROFGSb4