

Rehabilitation of Rural Women and Working Children through Basic Literacy and Skills Training in District Charsadda

Enhancing literacy in the district Charsadda, in the prevailing circumstances is an imperative; because not only a high number of children are out of school, but also because majority of the adults are illiterate. The worst hit in this regard is the women. Therefore an all front attack against women poverty and illiteracy is the clarion call of the day. A program that will make the women literate and enable her to learn essential life skills and be able to do a job within the confines of the home - to earn some extra rupees to support the household budget will pave the way for future generations' education and development. The life skills includes the essential skills that enable a women to live her life more productively such as reading a letter and or a utility bill or fill a form. Every girl/women is a mother or is going to become a mother. Therefore she must know how to take care of her as well as her child's health. This is the good reason that the project suggested that each women should know the skill of mother and child health care.

Every woman after doing her household chores has extra time. Utilizing that time productively would alleviate her poverty and enable the children to go to school, which would result, in the long term and in sustainable manners. All the above skills of literacy, life skills and vocational skill, inculcated in women, were deemed to rehabilitate and empower her. To achieve this objective, the integrated project under discussion was launched.

The project was launched in partnership of *District Govt Charsadda, USAID* and a private firm namely *M/S Logistic Solutions (Pvt) Ltd.*

Details of project's intervention to achieve the mentioned objectives are as given below.

6.1.1 SEED/project's Interventions

Enhancing education rate in the district by enrolling poor illiterate women (of 15 years and above) and the children working in various workshops in the district were made possible through collaborative efforts of the District Government, the SEED and the communities. For this purpose the following three main interventions were made.

i- Establishment of Community-based Literacy Centers for Rural Women

For this purpose against the planned 18 Women Literacy Centers, 28 were established in identified locations. Literacy and other courses for women empowerment were delivered in the centers. The literacy courses enabled the women to read and write, while the life skills courses enabled her to live a productive and safe life. The life skills course were so designed to increase the knowledge and awareness of the targeted women – with the ultimate goal to enable them to efficiently manage the domestic conflicts, and further lead to a prosperous, enlighten and productive life; geared to creation of educated and prosperous future generations.

Twenty-one centers have been established against the targeted 20 centers where in 530 learners have been enrolled as compared to the targeted 400. The literacy course was specially designed by the experts having experience in adult literacy - keeping in view the special needs of the area and the target group.

ii- Establishment of Community-based Literacy Centers for Workshop Children

To set an example for combating child labor, against 2 targeted Literacy Centers, three Literacy Centers were established in the Auto Mobile workshops. The willing children were enrolled in these Literacy Centers, where they passed the literacy level in 6 months.

The specialty of this project is its integrated approach. Literacy for the children working in the auto workshop is another dimension of this project. Three literacy centers have been established in auto workshops market situated on Mardan road. Forty-seven working children & ten adults have been enrolled in these centers. In these centers computer training too was imparted.

Interesting thing in the working children centers is that they took very keen interest in computer literacy and some of their workshop teachers too have been enrolled for computer literacy class.

The literacy course proved success in case of the women as well as the Workshop children. All the children and the women achieved the targeted reading and writing skills.

iii. Vocational Master Trainers Training

In collaboration of Mashal, a no profit organization working in various districts in partnership with the national donors for skill up gradation, survey for identification of saleable trades was made, followed by imparting of the identified trainings and establishing market linkages.

After extensive market survey, the trades of Dying and Zardozi were selected as the most plausible trades. These are the highly sellable trades in the local market.

In order to facilitate all women's training, it was deemed fit to train the women on the doors steps as the women's mobility in the area is very restricted. Training in two vocations spanning over two man months was arranged in the SEED office Charsadda. As per program 36 women from all the 18 centers (2 from each center) were invited to undergo the training. One girl from each center was trained in one of the vocations.

Thus each centers got two girls trained as Master Trainers in each of the two vocations. The training was imparted in Dying and Zardozi. The dying is the most sought after trade in the rural area. Due to paucity of skills in the villages, the clothes and sheet that is needed to be dyed is sent to towns and cities. This not only results in waste of time but also resources. Availability of such people within the village will not only reduce the cost and save the time, but will also result in self employment of the girls so trained. It is pertinent mention that again instead of 36 targeted Mater Trainer Women, 46 women were trained. The extra women were accommodated on the request of various organizations. Since it was deemed fit to train more number of women for rapidly propagation of the training, therefore the request was acceded to.

The trainings were concluded on 20.5.05. Certificate distribution ceremony was hosted by Mr. Laiq Urehman, Chairman PIC/District Coordination Officer, Charsadda.

Zordozi is a kind of embroidery in high demand in the local as well as big cities market. A single finished shirt has a margin of at least Rs. 500 for the trainees. There are several marketing outlets for this item.

iv. Marketing Linkages

Intensive efforts have been initiated to link the trained people with the market and with the micro credit institution where needed so that the training imparted are adopted for earning. A local party in the Charsadda has hired the services of the 11 women trained by the project to produced items as per design provided. Each women is receiving Rs. 200/= as wage for a single item she prepares. It is pertinent to mention that to prepare one item takes only two days,

v. Village Education Community

Sustainable development is impossible without the active participation of the local community. Extensive work was done in the first month for community involvement and creation of communities' ownership of the project. A number of communities have been visited in this regard. Nineteen localities were selected according to criteria developed for this purpose. Village

Education Communities were organized to be working as partners for implementation of the project in the locality and latter on ensuring continuity of the project/purpose in one form or other. Terms of partnership for managing the literacy centers in their localities have been signed with these education communities. The communities were given proper training for the successful operation & monitoring of the centers.

18 Village Education Communities have been formed for the literacy centers and one for the working children center.

vi. Communities Training

Formation of the communities with enhanced capacity is imperative for the project. Therefore it was deemed fit to train the communities not only to handle the literacy centers related affairs but also to have sufficient awareness and skills to keep the literacy trainings continued after the project period is over.

In the district the female mobility is restricted due to strictest veil system. Therefore calling the women member of the Village Education Community to SEED office for training would have resulted into a inconvenience for the women as they had already been to office twice before for training like teachers training and vocational training master trainers' training. The best option was to produce master trainer who will later on impart the community training at the village level. Five staff attended the ToT during May 2005. These Master Trainers later on imparted community based community training.

Major topics covered under community training are as given below.

- Introduction to SEED
- Importance of education.
- What is community
- Participatory approach in development
- Aims and goals of community
- Roles of community
- Role of participatory system
- Identification of problems
- Identification of resources
- Sense of ownership
- Establishment of women organization
- Women's empowerment

The community training revealed interesting results. Instead of 46 community members planned to be trained, 242 persons including 196 non members were trained. In most of the cases extra people came to attend the training. These included parents, teachers and learners. It speaks of the community interest in the training. The trainers training tools and the resulting information and awareness were highly surprising both for the trainers and the trainees they were too pleased on discovering new aspect about life and education.

The participants kept saying that why didn't they think on these lines before. Illiteracy is the main cause of our underdevelopment. There are resources and easier ways and means to do away with the illiteracy. They agreed that community participation is the imperative for development. It is interesting to note that the non community persons came to attend the training.

6.2 Advocacy:

Formation of community organization and establishment of the targeted number of Literacy Centers alone is not enough, unless the success is shared with the maximum number of stakeholders for replication and improvement of the program as a feedback.

For this purpose an advocacy program has been launched. Various ways and means are being used for highlighting the role district govt, USAID, RSPN, SRSP & logistics solution. The following measures have been taken in this regard. The events are being covered in the press reports. A comprehensive documentary has been prepared.

6.3 Social acceptance & change:

This project has got enough familiarity in communities. In the early days people communities did not allow the male member of the project staff to visit the literacy centers. Now the situation has changed considerably. There is no restriction on male monitors or visitors to see the literacy center and meet the learners.

Mulana Gohar Shah, MNA personally visited a number of times the project office demanding the literacy centers for their community. He appreciated the USAID for supporting such a noble cause in district Charsadda. He further told that they are not against NGOs.

In meeting with SRSP team at his residence arranged by SEED staff, Mulana Gohar Shah MNA requested the SRSP to start again their activities in district Charsadda with special focus on religious Madrassa. It is a clear indicator that the SRSP acceptance has been increased in district Charsadda with the activities of this project and if they plan any intervention in future for Charsadda, they will be welcomed.

6.4 District Govt. Charsadda sets an example

Role of the District Govt Charsadda is exemplary. The district govt. not only allocated resources for the project but also paved the way for the smooth implementation of the project. The Project Implementation Committee, beside District Coordination Officer as Chairman, comprises Heads of Key Departments functioning under the District Govt. such as EDO Education, DO Planning, DDO Finance. The PIC is holding regular meetings to review and plan the project. The chairman PIC has invited the Managing Director National Education Foundation to visit the project. This will provide not only an impetus to the project but will also facilitate further inflow of resources to the district.

District Govt. appraised all the Union Nazims about the program which resulted in the speedy and productive implementation of project.

6.5 Women empowerment

To put an end to all sorts of discrimination against women and give women to a productive life, the women empowerment program is of utmost importance. Vocational cum Non-formal Education Centers were established for poor out of schoolgirls/women of age group 15 years and above. In these schools, besides education vocational training were imparted, in order that the poor girls after getting education are properly reintegrated into society, by enabling them to be gainfully self-employed eventually.

Women empowerment was done in the following way and sequence.

Crash Literacy program

General knowledge

Health & hygiene,

Mother and Child care

Vocational training

Business planning and marketing

6.6 Course contents of the Literacy/empowerment program

To lead to eventual women empowerment, the following courses were offered.

a) Literacy course

For the standard of literacy to be achieved please the table No. 1 below.

b) Life skills and awareness

- ii) Avoiding accidents
- iii) First aid
- iv) Women and child health care
- v) Health and Hygiene

vi) General knowledge (environment, society, Govt. State, Democracy and political participation)

vii) Human, Women and Child rights

viii) Home based conflict resolution

c) Vocational Training

6.7 Literacy program contents' purposes

Various contents of the program as discussed above are purposeful. Details of the purposes achieved are as given below.

a. **Literacy course** – The Literacy course enabled the learners to learn the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. The course completed in four months. A variety of courses designed by various institutions were evaluated. The one that had already been tested under USAID program in Multan was adopted.

b. **Life skills and awareness** – Beside enabling the learners to get adroit in managing day to-day life and giving them a high level of awareness about various issues, this component strengthen the reading/writing capability of the learners. For this purpose all the material were provided in booklets form. Reading of these books enforced the reading writing skills and provided a treasure of knowledge on a variety of the subject. Thus the life skills component of the program will be dual purpose. Resource persons were arranged for participatory discussion on some of the issues. However the booklets are so designed that the teacher can inculcate the theme and enable the learner to read and write the lesson easily.

c. **Vocational Training**- this component of the program will enabled a woman to get skills to add to the house hold earnings. All the training were imparted at the doorsteps. Maximum efforts were made to impart training in those areas/fields which were based on the indigenous production of the area and for which there is a demand in form of services or products For this purpose a market survey with the assistance of Mashal Organization, who has years of experience in skills training was made. The survey revealed that the two skills are in great demand in the local markets of Charsadda, Peshawar and Mardan. These include Zardozi and Dying.

6.8 Literacy skills

The literacy course will enable the women to get literacy skills according to Govt of Pakistan definitions of literacy.1 Eventually the person will be able to have the following level of skills 2.

Reading	Writing	Numeracy	Others
Read news papers headlines and sub headlines.	Write one's own name and address.	Count and recognize/recognize figures 1-1000	Communicate clearly
Read and understand posters	Communicate in writing, using simple language	Add and subtract up to 3 digits	Use literacy skills in daily life
Read and understand simple printed paragraphs.	Write simple letter	Understand the principle of simple "addition" "Subtraction" "Multiplication and Division"	-
Read and recognize numbers 1-1000	Write numerical numbers 1-1000		-

(level of skills to be achieved after literacy courses)

6.9 Literacy Program and child labour

The program will cover both women and children, but with one difference that the children will

not be undergoing the vocational training phase, as they are already engaged in vocational training in a formal way. The program beside enabling the children to read and write, which will eventually be beneficial for their profession, will make them trained to avoid accidents at job and manage emergencies, and will enable them to better manage their personal life. However efforts would be made to enroll the willing children in the primary schools at an appropriate grade, after completion of Literacy program. This will result into withdrawal of children from condition of child labor.

6.10 Future collaboration

Due to over population, political instability, social, religious and sectarian strife and extremism, illiteracy, poverty, lack of awareness and natural calamities, the problems of the rural areas are exacerbating. Therefore a time bound program, to cater for the needs and problems that are either long lasting or may have arisen with the passage of time and new needs - or may have been complicated due to lack of attention or as cofactors or govt policy or socio political and economic environment, targeted intervention over a period of time, matching to the local problems/needs, are needed. Assuming that a single literacy and vocational training program will

lead to the ideal women empowerment and child protection - will be like living in pools paradise. Interventions over a period, with various depths and for various purposes are needed. Therefore it is essential that the program started with a set of communities and or targeted population, should be continued over a period of time till logical conclusion.

Hence collaboration started with community (women) under the proposed Literacy Program, would be followed by others in different or related field; for eventual development of the communities as model for replication in other areas.

6.11 Partners

Through partnership point of vies, the project will present an innovative idea of collaboration and pooling of resources by International Agency, District Govt, Communities and Civil Society Organization. Introduction to various organizations is as given below:

a. District Govt. Charsadda

The uniqueness of the plans lies in the partnership. It is for the first time that the District Govt. came into collaboration with an *International Development Agency (USAID)* and a Civil Society Organization **SEED**, to work for the empowerment of women in the poor areas, of the most conservative district of Charsadda.

The project was owned by the District Govt – Education Department Charsadda. SEED worked as the implementing Civil Society Organization. There was a joint management structure to implement and monitor the project. A district Steering Committee, comprising District Nazim, District Coordination Officer, EDO Schools and Literacy and EDO Finance, and Executive Director SEED monitored and review the progress. District Nazim will act as Chairman of the committee.

6.2 SEED's Educational Intervention

Education being on the top priority on the SEED agenda, SEED has started the education related intervention in District Charsadda, in September 2003. Initially SEED started with the establishment of one Non-formal School in Village Dargai. Responding to the pressing demands for more schools in the area, SEED has established 7 Non-formal Education Schools in two Union Councils of the District.

In view to increase the overall literacy rate by covering out of school working and non working children, through Non-formal education (single room, single teacher, and different age students), *SEED* took the initiative to develop two Union councils (UC) as education models. These UCs includes UC Manga Dargai, UC Sheikho in District Charsadda. All the activities undertaken at the below given places are in participation of the communities, with a quest to extend education to all out of school, working and non working children, progressively attaining hundred percent enrolment in the district by 2010. All out efforts would be made to utilize internal as well as external resources.

6.2.1 Union Council Manga Dargai

The UC comprise of two large and five medium size villages. Dargai, a peripheral village of the district is a classic example of poverty and illiteracy; where the majority of the people are landless and resource less. Those few who have agricultural land is a good example of small size landholdings, where in no case the productivity is of a size to sustain the household.

All most all of the populations comprise poor peasant class. Most of the out of school children are unpaid family helpers. The girls are mostly sent as domestic servants in the same or the nearby localities. Despite of the availability of schools, the enrollment is too low. It is for two good reasons, that people either cannot afford even the primary level education or they are not convinced on the utility of education. Brief about the SEE's educational intervention are as given below.

6.2.3 SEED Non-Formal Education School – Dargai

One such Non-formal Basic Education School was established in the Govt. Primary School's building, with the approval of the EDO Education, District Charsadda. Out of 30 students⁶ were girls. Most of the children were unpaid family helper in agriculture. After attending the school for three hours which starts early in the morning, they leave for the farms to help their fathers.

Majority of the children in the center/school are now mainstreamed to the formal (Govt. Primary Schools).

6.2.4 SEED Non-Formal Education School – Zahirabad

The area is a newly build rural slum, where almost every person is a landless peasant. Beside peasants, there is a labor class (daily wagers), who remain jobless for 4-5 month an year. Otherwise they earn a paltry amount through their self-effacing hard work in the harshest seasons. A primary school is available neither in the locality nor in the vicinity. Those available are remote and across the busiest road, therefore sending children there are at a great risk of vehicular accident and other untoward incidents; hence those few who wish to send their children there are dreaded to do so! Among the 42 children enrolled in the school, 14 are girls.

6.2.5 SEED Non-Formal Education Schools – Jagga (I&II)

The area is not much different than the preceding one in any respect but that the gender disparity is clearer here. Therefore an effort was made to enroll the out of school girl's children. All the 63 children enrolled here are girls.

6.2.6 SEED Non-Formal Education School – Mir Ahmad Shah Kili

This locality of Union Council Sheikho, laying detached from the rest of the UC is surrounded by UC Dargai, and this is the good reason that it gets none's attention for developmental work. Due to absolute poverty, almost every child is out of school; but the only private school in the locality is operating at full capacity. Initially one school of 30 children was opened here, but astonishingly the enrollment grew up to 90 within four days. Out of 95 children enrolled here, 85 are girls.

6.2.7 Union Council Sheikho

The Union Council borders the UC Dargai but has one difference that it comprises mostly small hamlets. The whole of the union council is situated along link roads, therefore faced with a variety of problems. The distinction between the landed and the landless class is comparatively distinct as the average land holding size is larger than Dargai. Since there is a grinding poverty and lack of educational institution, a large number of children are out of school.

6.2.8 SEED Non-Formal Education School – Sheikho

Like any other area this locality too is characterized by poverty and lack of educational institutions. There is a low awareness about education and hence low enrollment in the Govt. run schools. Out of 33 children enrolled here, 3 are boys. Encouragingly, there is a pressing demand for adult female literacy and skill training.

6.3 Main Streaming Religious Schools (Madrassas)

There is no gainsaying that the Religious Schools, locally called Madrassas, are playing a pivotal role in the overall literacy of the country. People from far off areas, especially the poor ones, send their children to the Madrassa for education. In Madrassas, these children are either sponsored by the Madrassas' Management through donations collected by volunteers by knocking at each and every door in the villages and cities, and, by contacting the well off people only, or through funds received from philanthropist institutions or person, who donate generously for religious purposes.

There is a mushroom growth of Madrassas in the province of N W F P. These Madrassas have focused on the poor and marginalized population. The Madrassas are functioning very successfully as is evident through the strength of students enrolled. In most of the Madrassas, free lodging and boarding is provided.

Thus two types of educational institutions, such as the Madrassa and the formal education institutions are operating side by side, but with different objectives and output – no doubt both are producing literate or educated people.

These Madrassaa are producing the high caliber of religious scholars. Unfortunately these scholars (Aalim) remain restricted to these Madrassas and their knowledge and intellect do not teach ordinary people, for the reason that the Aalims are not given jobs in any Govt or private or Civil Society Organization for they are not skilled in Accounts/Finance, Typing/Computer etc. Resultantly they join the Madrassas as teacher and are too low paid. On the other hand the formal educational institutions are producing highly skilled and the so called pragmatic people. In other words, these people, who may be practicing Muslims do not have command or even the basic knowledge about the simplest religious dogmas. These are either most liberal or indifferent people. The two classes co exist in the society with their own thinking and way of life. There is a ambivalence in the society. The extremist on either side negates the other, resultantly what is called the enlighten moderation is never found and whatever found is negated by side.

Therefore it is imperative to establish systems of education, where both the systems are unified and the true enlighten people are created-capable of explaining and exhibiting the religion and the modern way of life with convincing arguments and or style.

Under the Education Sector Reforms Assistance, a program for mainstreaming Madrassas has been put in place. In this connection the Religious Madrassa Board has been established.

SEED envisions the establishment of model Madrassas, in partnership with the District Govt. and the religious leaders and Madrassas' Management in the N W F P. In these Madrassas, besides teaching religious curriculum, course of the Govt Text Book Board will be introduced. This will result in the achievement of the following objectives.

- Mitigation of alienated feeling between the Madrassas and Civil Society Organizations (CSO).
- Introduction of formal education in the Madrassas system and hence enhance utility of Madrassas' education.
- A long lasting partnership between the CSO, District Govt and the Madrassas.
- Unification of both system of education.
- Enhancement of overall literacy rate.
- Extend educational facilities to the poor people who have access to the Madrassa only.

6.3.1 A big leap forward

On Friday, the 1st of April, 2005, SEED in Collaboration with Jamia Qasmia, which is a Madrass situated in Village Kott, District Charsadda, the primary level course of the Text Book Board, NWFP was started to the 35 religious students of the Madrassa. The inauguration is unprecedented in the history of Charsadda and perhaps anywhere for two special reasons such as:

1. Mr. Gauhar Shah, Member National Assembly inaugurated the School. Speaking to the participants on the occasion he said that learning of Social Science, especially foreign languages like English is imperative. English is an international language and is too much important for trade and diplomacy around the globe. He appreciated SEED's and other NGO's role in development work, especially in the field of education.

2. The District Govt representatives comprising of Mr. Laiq Ur Rehaman, District Coordination Officer Charsadda, and Mr. Ghulam Rahmani, Executive District Officer Education too participated in the meeting. Mr. Laiq Ur Rehaman highlighted the importance of formal education and appreciated the idea of mainstreaming religious schools into mainstream education.

After the introduction of the primary curriculum, the class has been named as Jamia Qasmia Primary School. It is pertinent to mention that all these children are from the District Dir, NWFP, and are the poorest. They are residing in the Mosque where the Jamia Qasmia is functioning. They do not have a mess system of their own. They are provided meals by the villagers and reside in the Mosque. The Mosque Committee is partner with SEED in managing the Jamia Qasmia Primary School.

As planned for the Jamia Qasmia Primary School, the 35 children who are of different ages, and have not been to school before, would pass the primary level within three to five years, depending on speed of their learning.

7 – Establishment of Tented Village School in the Earthquake affected Area

On October 8, 2005, a massive earthquake struck the northern NWFP and Kashmir. Beside the heaviest death toll, thousands of people were injured and or rendered homeless. The work affected were the children, who were injured, lost parents and other family members and were rendered school less due to vast destruction everywhere.

7.1 Relief Work

Feeling duty bound to respond to the clarion call of overstretching one's self to reach to each and every affected person, seed mobilized a group of volunteers comprising staff members, beneficiaries of children and women project, two Doctors and three Medical Students. The team collected relief goods including medicine, clothes and food items in District Charsadda. The goods along with the volunteers were transported to the village of Bhampora near Balakot. A sizable number of volunteers and philanthropist with assistance in form of relief good had already poured in to the area. Tents to start a small scale relief Hospital were received from various philanthropists. Simple injuries were treated on the spot while the complicated ones were transferred to the field hospitals.

7.2 Tented Village Schools

Restoration of the school system was imperative. The aim of this intervention was not only to save time but also to encourage children to come out of the trauma. The first of the Tented School was established in the same village with fifteen children. The first tented village school was established at Bhamphora near Balakot with only 15 children. It was a multi-grade, single room, single teacher arrangement. A female teacher was arranged from within the residents of the tented village and one tent pitched to serve as a classroom. Basic items such as books, stationery, board, mats, attendance registers etc were provided along with some recreational items such as a football and some toys. The school was established with the donations collected from various well off people.

Later on Mr. Brian Baldwin from Italy, offered his assistance. Eight years back he was attached with IFAD funded Mansehra Village Support Project – from where he had good relation with the Director SEED. Mr. Briabn provided an amount of 500 Euros for establishment of Schools for children in the affected area. The amount was collected by the children of St. Stephan School. This enabled to increase the number of schools from 15 (established by then) to 50. Each school was provided with two teachers and all other essential items to run them effectively. These schools were established from January 1, 2006. The children were mainstreamed to the formal schools, reactivated in the area on April 30, 2006.

Details of the schools established is as given below:

S.#	Tehsil/District	No of Schools	No. of Students		Total	Teachers
			Boys	Girls		
1	Balakot/Mansehra	21	293	171	464	42
2	Mansehra/Mansehra	18	243	142	385	36
3	Battagram/Battagram	11	142	79	221	22
Total		50	678	392	1070	110