

Early Childhood Development Project (ECDP) Balochistan
Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan)
Mid Term Review



Rafiq Jaffer and Razia Jaffer

February 2013

Acknowledgments

When we agreed to carry out this assignment our family members, friends and well-wishers expressed their concern that we would be working in a 'difficult' and risky area like Balochistan. Now that we are writing this report from 'safer' places, we are delighted to note that the most 'high risk' city of Quetta did not greet us with empty streets but rather with traffic jams. For once these traffic jams were a welcome assurance that life was normal for the resilient people of Balochistan. We have to give credit to everyone who made this trip safe and 'normal' for us. In particular:

- The AKF(P) management, including Dr. Karim Alibhai, CEO, Mr. Sher Ali Khan, Director, Education, and Dr. Haroona Jatoi, Programme Manager, Education, for their on-going support throughout this assignment
- The AKF team members Ms. Farah Huma, Programme Coordinator, ECDP and Ms. Shahnaz Mazhar, Assistant Programme Officer, who accompanied us on this mission and contributed to all aspects of the task, including logistics, data gathering, note taking, to name a few; and Mr. Tanvir Hussain, Programme Manager, MER, and Mr. Shakeel Ahmed, Programme Officer, MER, for providing us a good understanding of MER methods and issues; and Ms. Itrat for organising logistical arrangements
- Mr. Arif Amin, Senior Education Advisor, AusAID, for his valuable inputs at various stages of the mission
- Dr. Ghazala Rafique and Mr. Zulfiqar Bachani and other project team members of AKU-HDP, and Dr. Mohammad Memon, Ms. Cassandra Fernandes, Dr. Almina Pardhan and other project team members of AKU-IED, for providing us a good insight into various dimensions of the project
- The education officials who provided access to schools and valuable information regarding the role of the department; in particular Mr. Munir Ahmed Badini, Secretary, Education, Mr. Nizamuddin Mengal, Director Schools, Mr. Niamatullah Kakar, District Education Officer in Quetta; Mr. Khan Mohammad District Education Officer, Mr. Azizur Rehman, and Mrs. Hafiza Ghafoor in Gwader; Ms. Kaneez Tahir and Ms. Maria in Qilla Saifullah
- The three implementing partners, including Ms. Sajida Naseer, Mr. Asad, Mr. Farooq Mengal, Mr. Allauddin, and Ms. Shahida Awan of the Taraqee Foundation; Mr. Niaz Ibrahim, Mr. Abdur Razzak, Ms. Rakhshanda, Mr. Ghafoor, Ms. Zaitoon Abdullah and other RCDC team members; Dr. Qurutulain Bakhteari, Mr. Hubdar Ali, Mr. Khalid Shahwani, Mr. Gohram, Ms. Abida, and other team members of IDSP, who provided us information, reports, and logistical support, and some of whom also accompanied us to field sites; and their drivers, who transported us safely to field sites
- All the Lead Teachers, Heads, and teachers who provided us valuable information and insights, and provided us the opportunity to visit schools and classrooms
- The PTSMC members who took time out to meet us and share their views and experiences regarding the project
- Most of all we are very thankful to the wonderful children of the schools that we visited for providing us valuable insights into the change process taking place in their schools in their characteristic innocent and authentic manner.

This was a great learning experience, and we owe it to all who made it possible.

Rafiq Jaffer
Razia Jaffer
February 4, 2013

Author's Details

Rafiq Jaffer, Director, Institute of Social Sciences, Lahore (established 1978), has been involved in research, reviews, evaluations, human resource and organizational development, in the fields of education, psychology, management, special education, and community development since 1975. He has taught at the Punjab University and the Government College of Science Education, Lahore, and worked as Programme Officer Education at the Aga Khan Foundation, and Head In-Service Division of the Ali Institute of Education. He was also involved in the setting up of the Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development. He has participated and been a team leader in more than 30 reviews and evaluations of diverse social sector projects. He has conducted capacity development workshops and presented professional papers in over ten countries, some of which have been published nationally and internationally. He has authored four books and over 200 reports and training manuals. He was the Coordinator of the WHO/UNICEF Community Based Rehabilitation Project in Punjab, and wrote two papers which were published as book chapters produced by universities in the Netherlands and Canada.

Razia Jaffer works as a research, training, assessment, monitoring and evaluation consultant in the areas of anthropology, disability, education, rural development and sociology throughout Pakistan, especially in rural areas. She has been involved in curriculum development, training teachers, education supervisors, and school heads/principals, from the government, private, and non-government sectors. She has experience of setting up and running a school for early childhood education, and teaching in a centre for special education. She has also taught Anthropology and Sociology courses at the Punjab University Sociology Department. She did her Bachelor of Education from Punjab University and her M.Sc in Social Anthropology from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. She is Associate Director of the Institute of Social Sciences. She has also conducted training in Sri Lanka and Vietnam. She was a member of the team monitoring selected CIDA governance projects in Pakistan (2002-2009).

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Executive Summary

The Early Childhood Development Programme (ECDP)¹ is a three-year project (July 2010 – June 2013) of AKF(P) being implemented by three local NGOs in three districts of Balochistan with the technical support of Aga Khan University through an AusAID grant. The project aimed to enhance access, equity and quality of education with increased gender parity by improving the safety, quality and accessibility of the physical learning environment, increasing enrolment and retention of children (particularly girls), increasing community participation in school management, professional development of teachers and head teachers, improving educational leadership and mentoring skills of head and lead teachers and educational managers, and strengthening governance and management in the Department of Education (DoE). The project provided professional development support to schools clustered around Resource Schools. The project operated in a high risk environment, including major governance and management problems in the education system, severe political and sectarian violence, and bureaucratic governmental delays. The progress to date, and key findings are summarized in the matrix below.

Relevance	4	Highly relevant to priorities of Pakistani and Australian governments, parents, children; more relevant for ECD1 classes, schools with adequate student-teacher ratio, enough space, schools near LRC; less relevant for ECD 3 classes, schools with high student-teacher ratio, congested space, multi-grade teaching, schools distant from LRC
Effectiveness	3	Excellent progress in enrolling children (especially girls), reduction in corporal punishment, building capacities of LTs; medium progress in provision of learning materials and stationery, building capacities of heads and teachers, promoting Active Learning and improving student confidence; low progress in provision of teachers, activation of PTSMCs, development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs), developing student writing skills, and developing the governance, leadership and management capacity of DoE; no progress in provision of infrastructure, furniture, implementation of SIPs, M.Ed enrolment
Efficiency	2	Delays in project approval, hiring of, construction and furniture supply, causing major under-spending, delaying activities; activities delayed by project include baselines, exposure visit, provision of learning materials and stationery, TORs of LTs, Urdu version of teaching guide/manual, conduct of courses. But good delivery of capacity building workshops and courses in the available time, partnership worked fairly well despite multiple players, and risk management was partially successful
Gender Equality	5	Excellent progress on girls' enrolment, training of female heads, LTs and teachers, and providing ECD sessions to mothers; medium progress on participation of women in PTSMCs; low progress on training female officials
Monitoring & Evaluation	4	Excellent MIS, monitoring forms, data collection formats, procedures, high quality baselines; but weak logframe, delayed baseline reports, and absence of learning achievement data
Sustainability	2	Low government commitment; some components (active learning, mentoring, increased enrolments) likely to sustain in some LRCs and fewer feeder schools; professional development likely to continue in some clusters if LTs, heads and teachers receive necessary government support; some FRCs and active PTSMCs may continue working beyond project
Total	20	Overall Rating: 3.3 (maximum 6)

¹ See **Annexure 1** for a list of Acronyms and Abbreviations, and **Annexure 2** for a list of References used.

The **key lessons** from the project for similar future projects include: have a realistic time frame for an education project with multiple partners working in a high risk socio-political environment; in case of major delays, extend the project time frame early enough so that project planning and implementation can be adjusted in a timely manner.

The key **recommendations** of the project are summarized below by implementer and time frame²:

- Approve extension of project end date to June, 2015 (AusAID; short term)
- Revise project log frame, PMF and WBS, and build capacity of partners in monitoring and reporting (AKF(P); short term)
- Organise exposure visits between FRC staff of districts for mutual learning (AKU-HDP, IPs; short-term)
- Facilitate monitoring of classrooms using standard checklist (IPs; short term)
- Develop capacities of LTs in teaching writing, developing low/no cost materials, organising storage spaces, implementing ECD in unfavourable circumstances (high student-teacher ratio, shortage of space, multi-grade teaching, splitting 3-5 years in separate groups, etc.), so that they may transfer these skills to teachers/IPs; research may be conducted on some of these aspects (AKU-IED; short term)
- Arrange sharing of learning and best practices between LTs (e.g. use of register to assess social, emotional and intellectual needs of each student) (AKF(P), IPs; short-term)
- Conduct TNA, train FRC workers (e.g. social mobilization) (AKU-HDP; short term)
- Provide substitute teachers for longer courses (IPs; as and when required)
- Take steps to increase participation of women in PTSMCs (PTSMCs, IPs; short term)
- Review the FRC monitoring format developed by the FRC Coordinator in Gwader, and consider possibilities for modification in existing formats (AKU-HDP, IPs; short term)
- Have the translation of ECD Teacher Guide and Manual re-done (AKU-IED; short term)
- Review the topics for conducting case studies, and initiate work on them (AKF(P); short term)
- Provide PTSMCs with new formats for writing meeting notes developed by IPs (IPs; short term)
- Design and conduct assessment of learning achievement in project baseline schools, and use for TNA and to assess project impact (AKF(P), AKU-IED; short to medium term)
- Assist PTSMCs to form cluster level PTSMCs to increase their capacity to address common issues (IPs, PTSMCs; short to medium term)
- Identify/develop and provide standardized lesson plans for Class 1 and 2 incorporating the use of ECD approach and materials primary (AKU-IED; medium term)
- Identify skill training needs of women visiting FRCs, and arrange need-based skill training (AKU-HDP, IPs; medium term, after approval of extension)
- Support the community to form Management Committees to gradually take over the management of the FRC (AKU-HDP, IPs; medium term)
- Explore the possibilities of collaboration with PITE and Colleges of Education (for professional development of heads and teachers), by building their capacity through the M.Ed and Advanced Diploma programmes at AKUIED (AKF(P), DoE, PITE, AKU-IED; medium to long term)
- Facilitate/support LCs to take on learning support roles (DoE, AKU-IED; medium to long term)
- Negotiate with the GoB to include ECD running costs, including staff salaries, in recurring budget (AKF(P); medium to long term)

² Short term (1-3 months), medium term (4-12 months); long term (year 2)

1. Introduction

1.1. Activity Background

The education sector in Balochistan is characterized by serious issues of governance and management. These include: low enrolment and completion rates (especially girls); rampant corruption at various levels of education hierarchy; severe shortage of teachers, heads, classrooms, open spaces, physical facilities, equipment, materials, stationery; most part of development budget spent in last financial quarter; no recurrent grant for schools except salaries, with most schools surviving on contributions of staff and parents, or local revenue generation; slow process of teacher recruitment, non-merit recruitment/ appointment of teachers; marks not good basis for hiring as widespread cheating in exams; frequent transfers of officials, heads, teachers; infrequent monitoring, focused on urban schools, teacher and student attendance, and on coverage of textbooks rather than curriculum objectives; PTSMCs non-functional, disempowered; schools assessed on results of 5th, 8th and 10th grades, with *kachi* classes considered least important, and taught by the least qualified teachers (or older students), if at all³. Corporal punishment was banned in schools in 2010, but there is no mechanism for enforcement in the absence of necessary legislation.

The crisis of governance has been exacerbated by the recent Supreme Court judgment questioning the constitutional status of the provincial government of Balochistan, and declaring that the government had lost the authority to govern the province⁴.

Since the approval and initiation of ECDP, there have been some significant changes in the policy context, which has implications for both the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) and the ECDP. The 18th amendment has devolved education and most other ministries to the provinces. More importantly Article 25A of the Constitution has added education for children aged 5 to 16 into the list of 'Fundamental Rights'. There will be pressure on the provincial governments to adopt this legislation, which will have major implications for resource allocations and accountability.

A number of donors are supporting education projects with an ECED component in Balochistan, including STEP, Save the Children, UNICEF, IDO, etc. The World Bank is also keen to financially assist the education sector of Balochistan⁵. Working through UNICEF, AusAID is assisting the Government of Balochistan to formulate the BESP, which will provide strategic directions and an operational framework for the provincial Government to implement education reforms in line with the objectives of Pakistan's National Education Policy. An education situational analysis and sectorial diagnosis, and the draft

³ We were taken aback when the Secretary Education said that the interference of the provincial government was a major hurdle in achieving the goals of the education department, including recruitment of teachers for the project.

⁴ In order to save the government, last week the provincial assembly voted out and replaced the Speaker, who had declared the assembly illegal after the Supreme Court judgment.

⁵ According to the Balochistan Minister for Inter-provincial Coordination Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Punjab had launched various World Bank funded projects in their respective areas, but no project could be initiated in Balochistan due to the failure of Balochistan Education Department to follow up on this opportunity. (The News, December 29, 2012)

education sector plan have been completed. More importantly from the project point of view, a provincial ECE Plan, 2011-2015 is also in place.

The Policy Planning & Implementation Unit (PPIU) of the Balochistan DoE was established in the second half of 2010 to coordinate development activities of the department, including coordinating with donor agencies, overseeing activities carried out under different projects, and streamlining Education Sector Plans. The Additional Secretary (Development) is the Focal Person of the PPIU, with deputy focal persons for Planning, Capacity Building, IT, and Finance.

1.2. The Project

The Early Childhood Development Project (ECDP) is a three-year project (July 2010 – June 2013) of the Aga Khan Foundation being implemented in three districts of Balochistan, including Gwader, Quetta and Qilla Saifullah through a AusAID \$4.5 million dollar grant from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). The project goal is to enhance access, equity and quality of education with increased gender parity, participation and sustainability of community interventions. More specifically the programme aims to enhance the learning abilities of children in early years, develop the capacity of key stakeholders, and increase the involvement of the community in ECD interventions.

ECDP is a cluster-based professional development approach being implemented in 75 government schools, organized into 15 clusters in three districts of Balochistan. Each cluster consists of a hub Resource School (RS) and feeding schools, with Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) in each RS. A Lead Teacher (LT) is placed to lead the ECD initiative in each cluster. The project has also set up Family Resource Centres (FRCs) in each district to educate parents regarding ECD concepts. Other interventions include improvements in physical infrastructure (including making the structures safer), strengthening PTSMCs, sensitizing schools and communities regarding ECD and inclusive education, and supporting the GoB to implement ECD in government schools. The project trains government officials, head teachers, lead teachers, teachers, PTSMCs, FRC workers, families, and IP staff. It also conducts research, dissemination of research and policy dialogues at local and national levels.

The project is being implemented by RCDC (Gwader district), IDSP (Quetta district, and Taraqee Foundation (Qilla Saifullah district), with the technical support of the Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED, early childhood education), and Aga Khan University – Human Development Programme (AKU-HDP, early childhood development)

The timelines of project implementation are given below:

- Proposal submitted by AKF,P (March 2010)
- Proposal approved by AusAID (May 2010)
- Project submitted to Balochistan government (Aug 2010)
- Approval by Balochistan government (Aug 2011) (**one year after submission**)
- Inception phase: initial meetings with programme partners (Aug-Sept 2011)
- Implementation phase initiated (Sept, 2011)
- M&E System developed (Dec 2011)
- Schools Baseline conducted (Nov-Dec, 2011), report produced (March 2012)
- FRC Baseline conducted (March-August 2012)
- FRCs established and became functional (June-September 2012)

- ECD materials and ECED Teacher Guide (English version) distributed to IPs (July, 2012)
- Baseline (control) conducted (July-Aug, 2012)

1.3. Review Objectives

The Mid-Term Review (MTR), which was suggested in the Financing Agreement of the Programme, was designed to provide AKF (P), implementing partners, government, donor and the wider public with sufficient information to:

- a) Assess the quality and progress in delivery of activity outputs and objectives
- b) Assess any issues or problems and their impact
- c) Assess the progress made towards achieving sustainable benefits, and
- d) Identify and document any refinements to the activity based on the recommendations

The review was designed to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the interventions, with a focus on gender and disability. More specifically, the MTR was expected to come up with lessons learnt and practical recommendations to improve project design and implementation strategy for the remaining project duration and any future actions. The MTR was also expected to assess progress on the interventions for supporting the government institutions in developing their capacity to implement the Balochistan Education Sector Plan. The MTR Terms of reference are given in **Annexure 3**.

1.4. Review Scope and Methods

The review was primarily qualitative in nature, and involved meetings with a variety of stakeholders, including programme staff and AusAID in Islamabad, provincial and district officials, and heads, PTSMC members, teachers and students in 10 (out of 12) LRCs and 11 feeder schools in three districts of Balochistan. In addition data was collected from project reports, presentations by programme staff and government officials, and review of school registers, school development and lesson plans, student notebooks, PTSMC meeting minutes, etc. The main limitations of the review were a lack of time for the team to spend in schools. The details regarding the review sample, methodology and review team are given in **Annexure 4**.

2. Review Findings

The review findings are presented according to the review questions regarding relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability, analysis and learning.

2.1. Relevance

In this section we review the relevance of the project in relation to the priorities of the Pakistani, Australian and GB governments, and various stakeholders, and with reference to various components of the project.

The project is very much in accordance with the priorities of the government of Balochistan. The policy framework for the current Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP), 2008-2025 and, subsequently, the Early Childhood Development Programme (ECDP), 2011-2015 is provided by the 2006-2008 education whitepaper, the MDGs and the EFA targets. Building on the whitepaper 2006-2008 recommendations, the National Education Policy was prepared in 2009 by the Federal Ministry of Education through a widespread consultative process involving all the provincial governments. These goals are also supported by the Australian government. In addition priority areas for AusAID such as inclusive education and gender have been factored in the programme. The project also developed a framework on child protection which fits in with the AusAID policy on child rights and protection.

The baseline survey of school identified the situation of schools selected for project intervention. Most schools lacked electricity, clean drinking water and furniture. Most schools also lacked lesson plans, dropout rates were high (in Quetta only), while student-teacher ratios were high in Gwader and Qilla Saifullah, and only 13 PTSMCs were functional. On the positive side a majority of schools had boundary walls, teaching aids (black boards, charts, books, teaching kits), dedicated ECD teachers (26-37%), and low dropout rates (except Quetta), and most sanctioned posts were filled.

One of the findings not mentioned in the baseline survey, which came as a complete shock to us despite doing research in Pakistani schools for over three decades, was the **complete absence of any government financial support to the schools**. The GoB only pays for the salary of teachers, and nothing else, thus in fact using public resources for patronage or corruption rather than public service, lending credence to the Supreme Court ruling that the government has lost its moral authority to govern. We found schools using different methods to run the schools, including running a canteen or selling *papar* (papadum), or taking a small monthly fee from parents. In fact some of the schools introduced a fee of Rs. 50 per child in the new ECD classes, to cover the additional costs of stationery, and the hiring of a helper where the classes exceeded 50 children. On the one hand, this step shows that parents value quality education and are willing to pay for it, and enables the school to run the ECD classes in a sustainable manner. On the other hand, it reduces the pressure on the government to fulfill its duties, and burdens the poorest parents, who usually have plenty of children. The government's present approach will come under question if the Balochistan assembly approves legislation on the right to free and compulsory education.

Keeping the above context of schools in mind the project was relevant in that it initiated ECD classes in schools where the majority of schools lacked ECD classes and teachers and did not cater to the 3-5 years age group. The project also attempted to fill the gap of lack of space and ECD teachers by providing dedicated ECD classrooms and teachers through the project – unfortunately both these key components

are still missing in most schools., as the classroom construction has not yet started, while the government has only appointed ECD teachers in Gwader district.

The project has been **inclusive** in more ways than one. Firstly, it reached government schools in relatively remote areas and under-served districts like Gwader and Qilla Saifullah, and the poorer schools in Quetta. Secondly it increased the access of young children, especially girls, from poor backgrounds to an attractive classroom environment where they could play games, listen to poems, stories and songs, learn through manipulating stimulating learning materials, in an environment free from fear or verbal or physical punishment, and increase their confidence and ability to express and think for themselves.⁶ Thirdly, the project provided heads and teachers from deprived communities and government schools exposure to best practices in ECD, opportunity for continuous professional development in ECD, reduction in problems of managing schools/classes, motivating students, and involving children with learning and behavioral problems. Fourthly, the project improved monitoring and support of schools, and activated and strengthened dormant or dysfunctional PTSMCs of parents of poor children, thereby supporting the heads to manage schools more effectively. Fifthly, the project provided critical knowledge regarding ECD to poor parents, particularly mothers, who are generally illiterate and lack knowledge of safe child rearing practices, as well as caregivers. As a result of these developments, **the status of project government schools has improved in the eyes of most stakeholders, particularly parents, children, teachers, heads, and even the field administration.**

However, despite the high relevance of the project from the perspective of beneficiaries, the project is more relevant to certain grades than others. Teachers trained through the project, with the exception of a couple of outstanding LTs, were facing difficulties in integrating the use of ECD materials and methods to achieve the curriculum goals of Class 1 and 2. Typically teachers taught children with ECD materials for some hours of the day, and used traditional methods to 'cover the syllabuses. The other typical pattern was to teach children with ECD materials for some days of the week, and use traditional methods for the remaining days of the week. This pattern was used to meet the demands of two masters, the ECD coordinator and the school inspector. If the latter ever visits the school s/he normally checks the number of pages of the textbook covered, rather than student learning or creativity or confidence.

Related to this is a low emphasis on writing and greater emphasis on listening, speaking and, to a lesser extent, reading skills. We found that, with a few exceptions (e.g. LRS Peshukan Gwader, LRS Sam Khel Muslim Bagh), children were doing little written work, were mostly weak in writing, copies were poorly checked, and, in Gwadar, children in most schools, more so in Class 1 and 2, were weak both in reading and writing skills. Hopefully, these weaknesses will be addressed as more teachers receive training, especially on how to integrate ECD with primary curriculum objectives.

Ironically the very success of the ECD classes poses significant challenges for schools as well. The sudden jump in enrollments due to the attraction of children and parents to the colorful 'toys' in the classrooms and child-friendly teaching methods has created immense pressures on resource deficient schools in terms of physical space and facilities, including classrooms, furniture, matting, play areas,

⁶ Initially many parents complained that their children were only playing in schools and not learning; teachers had to make considerable effort to explain to the parents that in fact the ECD methods were designed to help children learn. **The fact that many, though not all, parents came around to this point of view was a major success in itself, showing how the project educated parents through the schools.**

washrooms, stationery, security and safety of materials and equipment, etc. Many schools reported enrollments of children from private schools, a rare phenomenon in the past.⁷ One possible topic for research or a case study might be the unintended impacts, both positive and negative, of setting up ECD classes. **Perhaps the project could also come up with some guidelines about how many children should be enrolled in which type of facility (classroom size, number of teachers, training of teachers, physical facilities available, etc.).**

One concern expressed by most teachers who received AKU-IED training or teaching guides was that the materials provided to them during training were mostly in English, which was difficult for them to understand. For example, the former head and now an excellent ECD teacher of a girl's primary school in Quetta, an M.A. in English literature who opted to move from teaching higher to teaching ECD classes, said that she faced difficulties in understanding some of the materials. The project is addressing this issue by translating the materials into Urdu; unfortunately the process has been slow, the translation quality is poor, and will need to be re-done, further delaying its availability.

LTs generally face difficulties in completing their tasks because of having to teach their own classes, mentor a large number of teachers in classrooms, travel to feeder schools (mostly an issue for female LTs), assess needs, design training, and prepare and conduct training sessions every week. One LT in Qilla Saifullah said that she had difficulties in getting the project vehicle for field visits, and said that she completed her own classes by 10.00 a.m., when she visited schools on Friday and Saturday. The project has done well to create maps of each cluster in each district. These maps show that many schools are located at quite a distance from the LRC, probably because these were the only schools that met the school selection criteria. **Thus the very idea of a cluster, in which the feeder schools are easily accessible from the LRC, is at risk because of geographical and selection constraints.**

One can conclude that the project is more relevant for ECD 1, and to a lesser extent, ECD 2 classes, schools with a reasonable student-teacher ratio, enough space, no or low risk of theft of materials, and where the school is a RS with an LRC, or is near an LRC. Conversely the project is less relevant for ECD 3 classes, schools with high student-teacher ratio, congested space, insecure materials, multi-grade teaching, schools at a distant from the RS/LRC, and teacher trainees who are not proficient in English. Issues of space, high student-teacher ratios, and theft of materials and equipment is greater in urban schools, while shortage of teachers is a bigger issue in rural schools. Hopefully the newly hired ECD teachers will help to resolve the problem in rural schools.

2.2. Effectiveness

ECDP is designed to enhance access, equity and quality of education with increased gender parity, participation and sustainability of community interventions. The project has the following three specific objectives:

- Expanded and effective ECD project delivery for Katchi, Class I and Class II and poor families, particularly for girls and underprivileged children.

⁷ In an extreme case a government school operating in a rented building brought all their children (about 27) to the nearby LRC in Qilla Saifullah Town, requesting the head to admit all the children and take all the staff as well, since this is what the children and parents desired after the starting of ECD classes in the LRC. The head wisely turned down the request, and offered to assist the school to improve its facilities for younger children – the school was not a feeder school because it did not meet the stringent criteria for selection of feeder schools.

- Improved quality and relevance of Early Childhood Education for Katchi, Classes I and II in the targeted areas of Balochistan.
- Enhanced capacities and participation of key stakeholders to ensure children's overall wellbeing.
- Advocacy of ECD and dissemination of ECD best practices.

This section reviews whether the objectives are on track to being achieved, and to what extent has the activity contributed to achievement of the objectives.

The project identified the following six outcomes to achieve its goal:

- **Outcome 1:** Infrastructure improved to enhance ECD access in the targeted areas
- **Outcome 2:** Improved delivery of Early Childhood Development in targeted areas
- **Outcome 3:** Improved Learning Environment in ECD classes – Katchi, I and II
- **Outcome 4:** Enhanced knowledge, skills and participation of parents and communities to contribute positively towards ECD practices
- **Outcome 5:** Improved ownership of Government officials and stakeholders to support ECD interventions
- **Outcome 6:** ECD Policy and Practice influenced

In this section we review the progress made by the project against their outcomes and the outputs necessary to achieve each outcome.

Outcome 1: Infrastructure improved to enhance ECD access

The project identified the following outputs necessary to achieve the first outcome:

1. ECD classes established/renovated in selected schools where applicable
2. ECD centres established and functional by location, area and need

Output 1.1: ECD classes established/renovated in selected schools where applicable

AKF (P) conducted a baseline survey of the 75 project schools in the three districts in October-November 2011⁸ - the survey was delayed as some project schools had to be replaced because they already had an NGO intervention. The study was carried out very thoroughly, including an excellent instrument for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data through well trained enumerators, and double entry data entry procedures with 99% accuracy. Some of the relevant findings include the following: 55 schools had a dedicated ECD classroom, with an average enrolment of 112 in the three classes of katchi, 1 and 2 (146 Quetta, 98 Qilla Saifullah, 70 Gwader). There were 148 dedicated ECD teachers in 75 schools (95 in Quetta, 40 Qilla Saifullah, 13 Gwader). Student teacher ratios were 46 in Quetta, 74 in Qilla Saifullah, and 81 in Gwader.

A second baseline of 75 control schools was conducted in July-August, 2012 – the report is under preparation. This baseline was delayed primarily due to the government concern that it would create expectations which neither the project nor the government would be able to meet. In fact the

⁸ AKF(P). Baseline Survey Report. Early Childhood Development Project. March, 2012

government wanted the project to provide support to the control schools as well if they were surveyed. Ultimately the government understood the need for the control schools, and allowed the baseline to take place. The project also faced difficulties in finding enrolment data in some schools, and in finding schools matching the intervention schools.

A much more significant delay was in the construction of classrooms, primarily due to the unwillingness of contractors to work in a hostile political, governance and security environment⁹. This in turn delayed the purchase of furniture for LRCs¹⁰. In a number of schools, classrooms for ECD classes are not being used due to the poor conditions of doors and windows, which increase the risk of theft of expensive ECD materials. Unfortunately, the project does not have a budget for any significant renovation of classrooms, since it only planned to build new ECD classrooms. Recently, a small amount has been allocated for minor repair and maintenance of temporary LRCs from budget not allocated for project activities. However, valuable time has been lost in the process, affecting project implementation.

Equally damaging has been the delay in hiring of ECD teachers by the GoB. Delays were caused due to a slow and lengthy process, with objections by the PPIU to the first round of interviews necessitating a second round of interviews, and further delay caused due to the inclusion of testing of short-listed candidates. Locally influential persons also tried to influence the hiring process. Fifteen teachers were hired in Gwader a few weeks before the MTR, with the RCDC Project Coordinator present during the interviews, but with no say in the final selection. Hiring of teachers in the other two districts was not completed until November, 2012. **During the MTR we saw a number of recently hired teachers teaching ECD classes in Gwader, and found their performance quite unimpressive.** One can only hope that training of these teachers in ECD will improve their performance.

Output 1.2: ECD centres established and functional by location, area and need

Due to the delay in construction 09 out of a total of 15 planned LRCs have been temporarily established in schools, including 01 in Gwader, 6 in Qilla Saifullah, but only two out of six in Quetta due to lack of space in schools selected for LRCs¹¹. ECD materials and equipment have been provided to these LRCs. Issues of space and theft of materials and equipment is greater in urban schools, while shortage of teachers is a bigger issue in rural schools.

Probably the most innovative aspect of the ECDP is the Family Resource Centers (FRCs) set up by the project in each of the three districts. This approach was adopted because the home-based approach used in the RCC project was not sustainable¹². The original plan was to establish the FRCs in

⁹ On the other hand a state of the art seismic resistant and disabled friendly building for a government middle school (the primary section is a ECDP school) was recently completed by Save the Children in Quetta city.

¹⁰ One partner, IDSP, purchased furniture before the construction of the building because, according to its Executive Director, delays in construction and purchase of furniture had substantially reduced its operational costs, resulting in reduction in its management costs (10% of operational costs), while staff salaries were payable every month. The furniture is dumped in the IDSP hall, preventing IDSP from using the hall, which is a source of income. This issue will be dealt with directly by AKF (P) and IDSP, since it does not involve other partners, and AusAID does not involve itself in grantee management procedures.

¹¹ One unforeseen consequence of the establishment of temporary LRCs in existing classrooms has been the dislocation of children from their classrooms to other classes or in the open.

¹² See, for example, the advantages of a center-based, as opposed to a home-based, approach to rehabilitate disabled persons in R. Jaffer. WHO-CBR Approach: Programme or Ideology? - Some lessons from CBR Experience in

government schools, BHUs/RHCs or spaces provided by the community. Due to the non-availability of such spaces, the project had to look for alternate spaces. Eventually the FRCs were established in a spacious hall of the RCDC school in Gwader, the Hudda Skill Centre of IDSP in Quetta, and a Basic Health Unit (BHU) in Muslim Bagh. All the FRCs are well staffed, furnished and equipped. There are some regional variations, e.g. the Gwader FRC, which is housed in the well-equipped RCDC complex, is able to show videos as well.

The FRC in Urgus, Muslim Bagh (Qilla Saifullah district) is particularly interesting. Faced with the problem of lack of space in the BHU, the men formed an FRC committee (an innovation in the project), ran the FRC in the home of a committee member for 5 months, allocated funds from another project to build two rooms in the BHU, and then got one new and one old room allocated for the FRC. This provided a solid foundation for a sustainable FRC, the only one housed in a room built through community efforts in a government building.¹³

Outcome 2: Improved delivery of Early Childhood Development

Output 2.1: Improved capacities of ECD teachers in ECD teaching methodologies

ECD teachers got various opportunities to improve their ECD teaching methodologies. Ninety seven (M=19, F=78) (target 110) LHWs, TBAs and *kachi* teachers attended a 5 days training on basic ECD concepts. We did not get the opportunity to meet LHWs and TBAs or assess the impact of the training on their knowledge and skills, but managed to talk to some *Kachi* teachers in Quetta who had attended the training. While they generally appreciated the training, their understanding of ECD concepts varied from good to average. Some issues faced by the partners included preference of teachers to attend PITE training in which they were given TA/DA, and lack of cooperation of the DHO in Qilla Saifullah. Some of the staff who were unable to attend because of these issues were later included in a refresher course.

Seventy two (M=23 F=49) (target 75), including Lead Teachers (LTs) and teachers, attended a 5-days training on National ECE Curriculum for *Kachi*, Class 1 and 2. The training was highly innovative in nature. For example, participants wrote indigenous stories and poems, which not only increased their involvement and creativity, but also showed them methods to increase creativity in teachers and children. More importantly, LTs were involved in planning and delivering training sessions, an excellent preparation for LTs to conduct training in LRCs. However, delayed construction meant that LRCs were not available for conducting training. There were also delays in organizing the training due to shortage of teachers in Qilla Saifullah, while some of their teachers did not meet AKU-IED selection criteria. The application of training in the classroom is discussed under Output 3.2.

Output 2.2: Improved capacities of Lead Teachers in Mentoring & Leadership

Twenty one (target 24) participants (M=9, F=12), including LTs and IP staff, attended 10-days training on Mentoring, Leadership and Setting up LRC programme in ECD at AKU-IED. One female participant

Punjab, Pakistan. In M.J. Thorburn and K. Marfo, (Eds) *Practical Approaches to Childhood Disability in Developing Countries: Insights from Experience and Research*. Department of Educational Psychology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, 1990

¹³ The AKF(P) MER section plans to develop some case studies on the project. The Qilla Saifullah FRC could be one of those cases.

dropped out due to personal reasons, while one male participant was transferred. Eight of these participants also attended a follow-up workshop in Qilla Saifullah. Unfortunately, the DoE did not send any LCs to the training.

Some issues faced in organising and conducting the training included getting permission of some female participants to go to Karachi, TA/DA for participants, and inclusion of some LTs in Qilla Saifullah in the training who had already been trained at AKU-IED under the STEP project.¹⁴ The organisers wisely allowed the LTs to attend the training, and asked them to train LTs who replaced them on their return to schools.

Talking to the LTs and observing them in classrooms suggest that most LTs (except two in Gwader and one in Quetta) had good conceptual understanding of ECD, which was also evident in their excellent classroom performance. However, one of the **issues identified by some LTs** related to their work was that they were not clear about their roles, despite receiving training from AKU-IED and receiving honorarium from the project for some months. One reason for this was the non-availability of the Director Schools.

While talking to a group of LTs in Qilla Saifullah, we discovered that the LTs were following different schedules for their school visits. While one female LT was going two days a week (Fridays and Saturdays at 10.00 a.m.), the other was going as per need, spending more time with teachers who needed more help, rather than following a fixed schedule. The latter approach seems more valid, but it was creating problems for the first LC, who missed out on visits since only one project vehicle was available, and it also had to be used for other project activities. The approach of the project is to follow a fixed schedule. It may be useful for the project to have a joint meeting with all LTs (or at least the Quetta and Qilla Saifullah LCs) to identify their needs and issues, and jointly develop mechanisms to resolve their issues. The pros and cons of a fixed versus a variable visit schedule should also be discussed.

We were not able to observe any ECD training session conducted by an LT at any LRC, or any LT mentoring a teacher in a school. However, LTs identified a number of issues regarding these sessions. Attendance of ECD teachers in workshops was irregular due to problems of travel (female teachers) and work load of teachers. In Qilla Saifullah the training sessions by the LT were delayed and conducted in the summer break due to delayed hiring of ECD teachers. Our own observations of teachers who have attended these workshops suggest that the impact of these workshops is variable, and depends on a host of factors, including the training of the teacher, basic competence and skills, work load, teacher-student ratio, motivation level, support of head teacher, amount of mentoring received, etc.¹⁵ Moreover, most LTs are unable to adequately follow-up on the application of training or give enough mentoring support to teachers in feeder schools, because s/he has to teach classes and mentor teachers in his/her own school, faces problems in reaching schools despite transport being provided to female LTs by the IPs (this problem was mentioned by a female LT in Qilla Saifullah). For example, the LT in University Colony school Quetta, who was also the head, was very knowledgeable and skilled, but faced

¹⁴ It was discovered in the first few days of training that these LTs had already been trained at AKU-IED under the STEP project, which the LTs did not mention to the IP during the nomination process. They were identified by the STEP team, but were allowed to continue the training as it was inappropriate to send them back during the training. The lead teachers were asked to train the newly selected lead teachers on their return to QS.

¹⁵ Identifying the mix of factors that create good learning in ECD classes in the hub and feeder schools could be another topic for a case study by the AKF(P) MER section, or perhaps a research by AKU-IED.

difficulties in promoting ECD classes due to non-cooperative teachers and poor physical facilities. On the other hand the best LTs that we observed also had access to excellent physical facilities.

Output 2.3: Improved capacities of Head Teachers in classroom supervision and school management

Seventy (M=22 F=48, target 75) participants, including Head Teachers/In-Charge attended 5 days training on school management, leadership and mentoring skills. Considerable challenges were faced in getting head teachers from Qilla Saifullah to attend, as the DEO tried to stop their nominations, did not send any LCs, and also raised the most popular issue of TA/DA. Nevertheless the IP was able to persuade families to allow female heads to travel, and arranged substitutes for 1-2 teacher schools.

Generally schools in Pakistan are assessed on the performance of their students in the terminal exams (5th, 8th and 10th grades). One change that we noticed in the heads was a shift in their mind-set towards ECD and *kachi* classes from being unimportant to being the foundation for future performance. This change motivated heads to facilitate ECD teachers in running ECD classes. For example, the head of the LRC in Samungli Jinnah Town, Quetta, which has one of the largest physical spaces and building facilities among government schools in the city, said that initially she resisted the idea of focusing on ECD classes, but now she was fully supportive – this was evident from the way the classes were organized and conducted in a large number of sections in this spacious school.

Outcome 3: Improved Learning Environment in ECD classes – Katchi, I and II

Output 3.1 Improved access to ECD learning material in classes Katchi, I and II

The project re-printed 90 sets of the learning material and manual for *Kachi*, Class 1 and 2, previously developed under the RCC project, and provided 75 sets to all target schools in July, 2012. However, their use was delayed due to late supply, two months summer vacations in Gwader and 20 days summer vacations in Qilla Saifullah, followed by Eid holidays. Because of the risk of theft, the material was sent to Qilla Saifullah schools after the Eid holidays. So the materials were delivered to schools in Gwader and Qilla Saifullah in early September, just two months before the MTR.

RCDC organized ceremonies in each project school in Gwader in which the DC and senior district education officials addressed the participants, including parents, PTSMC members, education officials, teachers, project staff and RCDC board members. Parents particularly appreciated the learning corners and ECD materials, and expressed the hope that their children would now get the kind of quality education only found in expensive private schools.

All the ECD classrooms that we visited had a variety of high quality, attractive and interactive learning materials, and many of them had good low/no-cost materials as well. Learning Corners were organised in most classrooms. Access, however, was dependent on the number of children in classes, space available in rooms for placing materials and movement of children, student-teacher ratio, height of materials, and ability of teacher in conducting ECD classes. Access was higher in less crowded classes, spacious rooms, low student-teacher ratio, and in classes with skilled ECD teachers.

The **placing of materials** also contributed to their accessibility. For example, in Gwader, the materials, which arrived quite late, were placed in the classrooms on well-designed shelves. But, the shelves were

too high for younger children to access. Security of materials had prevailed over access¹⁶. In most other classrooms, the materials were placed on the ground, and blocked valuable classroom space, particularly where class strength was high. There is obviously a need for having different storage arrangements for consumables and learning materials.

The **skill and withitness¹⁷ of the teacher** were important factors as well. Skilled teachers were able to handle group work and activities in an efficient manner, and ensured the participation of most, if not all, children. The situation was quite different in the classes of less skilled or less active teachers – we found children snatching materials from each other, younger children merely observing ‘group’ activities, etc., with the teacher either not noticing or preferring to ignore the children. In most classrooms with more than 50 children, we usually found two teachers, or a teacher and a helper, managing the classes together. Nevertheless, even the best teachers, with helpers, are unable to ensure participation of the majority of children when classes exceed 100. Also teachers who had to teach multi-grade classes (two or three classes at a time) faced considerable difficulties. In a number of schools we saw multi-grade teaching in ECD classes (e.g. ECD 1 and ECD 2 in the same classroom), being taught either by one or two teachers. **Since these are the realities of government schools which are likely to continue in the future, the project needs to equip teachers with strategies and materials to deal with extra-large (EXL) classes and multi-grade teaching.**

Schools which never had very young children or attractive ‘toys’ in their classrooms reported a number of teething problems when the ECD classes started¹⁸. The most commonly cited problem was that of ‘theft’ of learning materials. After all how do you convince a three year old that the toy that she has been playing with for three hours has not become her personal property, to be taken home (parents with young children will certainly understand the seriousness of the challenge). Gradually, however, the children adjusted to the norms of the school and the classroom.

The Muslim Bagh LRC (Qilla Saifullah) was outstanding with regard to the handling of ECD materials. For one the LT had made a duplicate set of alphabets, numbers, and other ECD materials which was possible to replicate using durable materials¹⁹. The materials were arranged at the appropriate height on shelves all around the room. However, the LRC had only 26 students, unlike schools where the number of ECD students exceeded 50, and even 100.

¹⁶ We visited Chakan Shah GBPS in Qilla Saifullah, declared a model school by AKU-IED because of its excellent display of learning materials. However, we were disappointed that the materials were not being used regularly and children learning was poor, as the Head (trained in the split course) was concerned about their safety, despite the instructions of the LT to use them.

¹⁷ Teacher's awareness of what is going on in all parts of the classroom at all times

¹⁸ For example, when the ECD classes started in the Qilla Saifullah Town LRS, many children started attending classes with their older siblings without being enrolled – they were enrolled after a few days. Many young children would leave the classroom to go home when they heard the sound of the bell after the first period ended. Many said they were hungry, or had a headache, etc. Children would even follow a teacher into her class because they liked the nice ear rings that she was wearing, regardless of which class she was teaching. In some cases we also saw young children sitting with their older siblings in higher ECD classes.

¹⁹ The extent of application of ECD materials can be gauged by the question asked by the head of a school in Muslim Bagh (Sam Khel) about the brush provided for cleaning the materials: “We don’t know the use of this object.” It was obvious that they had managed to use every other material in the ECD kit.

The most common complaints were that the materials arrived late (e.g. when the materials arrived in Gwader, schools had closed for two months of summer vacations); the same materials were provided for all three classes, whereas teachers felt the need for materials specifically for Class 2 children; there was a lack of storage space, and rooms were not safe for storing the materials, due to risk of theft (more in urban schools); the floor mats provided by the project were too thin, and children felt cold and uncomfortable sitting on them. The most daunting situation was faced by a school in Quetta operating in two shifts, one with and one without ECD classes; the learning materials had to be stored away and then placed in the classes every day.

Output 3.2 Active Learning demonstrated through adaptive co-curricular classroom activities

Active Learning in the ECD parlance has five components, namely Manipulate, Materials, Choice, Language, and Support (remembered by the acronym MaMaChoLaSu, coined by the AKF Madrassa Resource Centre Programme). In many classrooms, we found these words written on a chart. We also inquired about the components from many of the teachers. Knowledge of the five components of Active Learning was higher among teachers who had attended the 4 weeks tailor made split course (3 weeks at AKU-IED and 1 week in the field), and lower in those attending shorter courses, while it was absent in all untrained teachers. The same pattern was observed in the conduct of ECD classes, with the best performance by the participants of the split course and the poorest by untrained teachers, with a few exceptions.

We saw some excellent examples of the use of Active Learning approach, particularly where the teacher or LT had attended the longer split course. For example, many students preferred to go to a particular Learning Corner (e.g. the Home corner was often popular with girls, and the art corner with boys, while few children wanted to go to the math's corner). Instead of forcing the children, the teacher allowed the children to spend time in the corner of their choice, and then gently encouraged them to go to other corners. Teachers usually explained this to students as well, so that they understood why it was important for them to visit all learning corners. It was heart-warming to see children busy in their respective corners, manipulating materials, stamping and coloring designs, etc. Many teachers who had attended training workshops through other projects said that **the setting up of Learning Corners, and the regular training and classroom support from LTs distinguished this programme from all others that they had previously attended.**

We also saw many examples of use of low and no cost materials, including waste materials and products (e.g. things made from earth) brought by the children from their homes. **This is also an excellent method to involve parents, especially mothers, in the teaching-learning process, and educate them about recycling waste.** Similarly, the project is **gradually reviving the old art of story-telling, as children are now beginning to ask their parents to tell them stories** – this is one area where the parents don't have much choice!

In many schools we also saw certain best practices which were being used only by a specific teacher, and which could be replicated by the project in other classes and schools. For example, one teacher in the BMC Colony LRC in Quetta showed us **a register in which she had assessed the Social, Emotional and Intellectual development of each child in the class against a set of indicators, with a symbol representing a low, medium or high score in each box.** Such a practice can be replicated in classes where the number of children is reasonable.

In most of the schools that we visited, we heard from heads, teachers and even parents regarding improved attendance of children (parents said that children even wanted to go to the school on Sundays), reduced dropout (which was common in younger children previously), children doing homework on their own (previously had to force them), etc. **These are truly excellent achievements of the project, considering the short time that the project has been operational in schools.** These are also components of the project that, we feel, are likely to continue beyond the life of the project.

In our decades of research on classroom practices and studies of impacts of projects on schools, we rarely find the impact of training visible in government schools and classrooms.²⁰ We were, therefore skeptical when we went into these poorly resourced government schools, only a few months after the start of ECD classes. However, we were both surprised and delighted to see a lot of excellent teaching-learning processes in the classrooms, particularly where the teacher or LT had attended the 4-week split course.

We did puzzle over this interesting finding, and came to the following conclusions: (1) The training, particularly the split course, was of a very good standard, and involved considerable hands-on experience, as well as conceptual understanding of the ECD approach and methodology; this was less true of the short courses. (2) Since the implementation of ECD in the classroom is highly structured, i.e. learning corners, standard materials, a well-defined and measurable focus (Active Learning), the chances of going wrong or forgetting what to do are low. (3) Psychological research shows that if you want to learn a new behavior, you need to practice the behavior without a break for 21 days; so the duration of the course was just right. (4) The inclusion of a one week follow-up was an excellent strategy to reinforce the new behavior and skills – like a polio booster dose (at the risk of offending some differing sensibilities). (5) The hard work and continuous support and monitoring by the IPs and AKF (P) played a key role as well.

Of course the new system is not without its problems. In the government system, children of age 5 and above enroll in *kachi* class. In most private schools children enroll from 3 years onwards (prep), and move on to nursery and KG, in subsequent years, before joining Grade 1, mostly at the age of five or six. With the introduction of ECD classes in government schools, children of ages 3, 4 and 5, and often older children, are enrolled in the same class (called ECD 1). This creates a number of problems, particularly because the sizes tend to become large. This is not surprising, considering that much better educated urban teachers in middle and upper class schools teach much smaller classes of children of only one age group coming from much more enriched backgrounds, while less educated and trained teacher are expected to teach a large class of three age groups of children from less stimulating backgrounds.

In many, particularly larger, classes we noticed that older children tended to get the material when it was handed over by the teacher, or grabbed it from younger children, and did the 'group' work on their own or with one of the older children. Thus the Manipulation of Material as well as Choice was generally greater for older as compared to younger children. It is very difficult to apply a number of ECD methods and interactive activities in large, congested classes. For example, one teacher rightly asked us: "How do I make groups when there is hardly any space for children to move?"

²⁰ See, for example, Jaffer and Jaffer. *What Makes a Quality Teacher? – Report of Literature Review, Research Study and Dissemination Workshop*. UNESCO and UNICEF, Islamabad, 2004

Another practice, which is common in government schools, is for children to chant in a chorus, often in a loud, voice. This leads to a shouting match between the teacher and the children. In this too, the older or more knowledgeable children lead the pack, with the weaker ones following. This tends to create the phenomenon of social loafing.²¹ Chanting in chorus was present in quite a few ECD classes that we observed.²²

Where enough classrooms and teachers are available, large ECD 1 classes should be split by age levels and taught by different ECD teachers. We suspect this is already happening in some of the larger schools (e.g. there were two or three sections of all the three ECD levels in Jinnah Town Quetta and Qilla Saifullah Town).

The other, more major, issue is **integrating ECD activities with regular teaching** in Class 1 and 2 (called ECD 2 and ECD 3 in project language). With some rare exceptions, such as the LTs of Pishkan (Gwader) and Sam Khel (Muslim Bagh), most teachers found it rather difficult to integrate the two. One common variation was to divide the week between ECD days and regular teaching days using textbooks. In one school the three ECD classes each came for two days in a week to the 'ECD room', and studied their regular syllabus in the remaining days. According to the project LTs and teachers attending courses at AKU-IED were taught how to integrate the ECD methodology and learning materials in regular teaching. **It is obvious that LTs, and particularly teachers, need much more help before this objective is practically realized.**

Outcome 4: Enhanced knowledge, skills and participation of parents and communities to contribute positively towards ECD practices

Output 4.1: Forums for Parent and Teacher interaction established and their capacities developed

The baseline survey presented a bleak, though not unexpected, picture regarding PTSMCs. Of the 75 project schools, only 49 had a PTSMC, out of which only 13 were functional. Only six of these 'functional' PTSMCs were conducting monthly meetings, while the rest met less frequently. None of them were aware of their roles and responsibilities or the importance of ECD²³.

The project initiated a process of identifying PTSMC members, and re-forming, or re-activating PTSMCs. This process was delayed in Quetta and Qilla Saifullah due to long winter vacations, and completed in May 2012. During the process the project also introduced the ECD project and its major components to communities. However, before the PTSMCs could become fully operational by opening their bank accounts (itself a lengthy process), and being notified by the government, the PPIU informed IPs that GoB has made amendments in its PTSMCs by-Laws, reducing the number of PTSMC members from 7 to

²¹ Social loafing is the phenomenon of people exerting less effort to achieve a goal when they work in a group than when they work alone.

²² We met and had a useful discussion with two AKU-IED facilitators and two monitors who had come to Quetta for the follow-up portion of the split course. We also observed a classroom session conducted by an LT in a school in Quetta in which a facilitator observed the class, then conducted a demonstration class, and finally reviewed the session with the LT. One point made by the facilitator was that children should speak softly rather than shout.

²³ AKF(P) Baseline Survey ECED, March, 2012

5 (2 teachers and 3 parents)²⁴. Moreover, the DoE gave the task of formation/activation of PTSMCs of Middle and High Schools all over Balochistan to an NGO. All the PTSMCs of the project schools were reviewed again as per revised by-laws, which was quite time consuming, and were restructured by June, 2012. As a result of project efforts the DEO Gwader notified PTSMCs in all project schools in Gwader. A 3-days training of PTSMCs was conducted in Peshukan (Gwader) where PTSMCs of two schools participated. **However, the PTSMCs had not been notified in Quetta and Qilla Saifullah by the time of the MTR, and were a major source of demoralization for all stakeholders.**

The project has developed a simple but useful one page format for a School Improvement Plan. The development of plans was delayed due to the delay in the notification of PTSMCs. We were told that a few PTSMCs had developed these plans, but were unable to see any of them.

In the meantime AKF (P) organised a 3-day ToT for Training of PTSMCs for IP project staff. Topics covered included PTSMC Structure, Formation & Roles and Responsibilities, School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Resource Mobilization, Child Protection and Wellbeing, Gender and Education, Conflict Resolution, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Record Keeping and Budgeting and Presentation Skills.

The PTSMCs we talked to varied greatly in terms of their involvement in school affairs. While there was no way to accurately assess the status of the PTSMCs, a rough guess would be that about a third were very active, while an equal number were moderately active, and a third were or not active and unclear about their roles. We found that the key role was played by the school head, and one or two active parents or community members. Of course there was also the odd case where the PTSMC said that they did not have to be active, since there were no major issues, and the head (LRS Jinnah Town, Quetta) dealt with all matters in a very effective manner. In one case an influential community members also played a very negative role.²⁵

One hopes that the performance of PTSMCs will improve once they are notified and receive training regarding their roles and functions.

Output 4.2: Capacities of parents developed in ECD linking it with child health and development to bring about a positive behavioural change.

FRC workers visited households to enroll mothers in the programme. This was quite a challenging task, as mothers were often suspicious of ECD workers, and the workers had to apply all the interpersonal skills at their disposal to convince mothers, and often other family members, to attend the sessions at the FRC. Understandably, there were few mothers in the initial sessions at the FRC, and it took considerable time for attendance to improve. The reasons for low attendance included pre-occupation of mothers with household duties, no permission to attend sessions, and difficulty for mothers,

²⁴ The information reached the IPs late as the designated person for ECD project at the PPIU was in Karachi on medical leave for more than a month and the PPIU did not appoint any substitute.

²⁵ The owner of the land on which the Chakan Shah GGPS is built wishes to have his daughter-in-law, who has an 8th class education and is an expectant mother, to become the ECD teacher. Hence he threatened the newly appointed NCHD teacher, who was the top student in the same school, to leave. The head knows that the landowner's daughter-in-law will never teach, whereas her student would make an excellent teacher, and meet a dire need, as she had only two teachers in the school. When we reached the school, this young teacher was conducting a PT class for girls, the first such class that we witnessed. We also saw the project staff vainly negotiating with the son of the land owner to allow her to continue.

particularly illiterate mothers, to fully understand or benefit from the sessions, or be able to use the learning with their own children.

AKU-HDP produced excellent ECD materials (0-8 years) in Urdu (handouts, slides) and did a good job of training the FRC facilitators. The project planned to conduct 15 community mobilization sessions and 336 education sessions for parents in each district. Community mobilization sessions have been completed, and sessions for parents are in progress. So far 884 mothers and 37 fathers have attended sessions on ECD in the three districts.

We attended a parenting session at each of the three FRCs. Generally FRC facilitators had good knowledge, were well prepared, made good use of teaching aids (cards, charts, videos, slides), used interactive methods including activities and group work, and made efforts to involve participants. However, educated participants tended to dominate the sessions, which was understandable, given their greater knowledge and understanding of the topics discussed. Our own illiteracy (in Balochi/Pashto language) also was a handicap in fully understanding the dynamics of the session.

Facilitators also took feedback from the participants regarding the session using a form, which they filled themselves after asking participants who were non-literate. They also reviewed the application of learning in the previous session at the start of the new session. On the whole the facilitator in Gwader was the most skilled, while the one in Qilla Saifullah needed the most support (to speak slowly, use better visuals). Understanding of mothers regarding the concepts taught was mixed, with better understanding of ECD concepts among mothers in Quetta, perhaps due to their higher exposure. In general facilitators would benefit from training in facilitation skills, particularly increasing the participation and understanding of shy/non-literate participants.

The response of men to the FRCs has been quite varied. For example, attendance of men in FRC sessions in Quetta has been low due to a variety of factors, including busy schedules, poor security situation, and being better informed than women. On the other hand there was great interest and involvement of community members in Muslim Bagh (Qilla Saifullah district), particularly fathers, who appreciated learning about nutrition, social change, and other issues.

One of the demands that we consistently heard was to provide skill training (sewing, handicraft, etc.) to mothers along with the ECD sessions. The partners (IPs) also supported this suggestion, since it would motivate the community, increase attendance in the sessions, and help families to earn an income or, at least, save on household expenses. When we mentioned this in the MTR debrief in Islamabad, we were pleasantly surprised to hear from the HDP director that they would be able to meet this demand.

Output 4.3: Enhanced awareness of community on health, hygiene and inclusive education

This activity is yet to begin, as FRC facilitators are pre-occupied with conducting sessions for parents.

Outcome 5: Improved ownership of Government officials and stakeholders to support ECD interventions

Output 5.1: Capacity development of stakeholders through short courses

AKU-HDP developed six modules on ECD concepts/themes for staff of the three FRCs. The modules have been translated in Urdu as well, but the process was delayed due to heavy engagements of reviewers (senior AKU faculty). **We found both the materials produced by AKU-HDP and their Urdu translations of a very high quality.**

Thirty two (M=9, F=23) participant, including FRC staff, project managers, M&E Officers, ECE facilitators, and volunteers of IPs, attended a 5 days training workshops on ECD concepts, planning and organizing educational sessions for parents and caregivers, responsibilities of FRC coordinators and staff members, and FRC management and monitoring checklists. We found the monitoring check lists well designed and very comprehensive. We also saw an excellent example of adaptation of the checklist by the Gwader FRC coordinator.

Twenty three participants (M=6, F=17), including FRC staff, project managers, M&E Officers, and ECE facilitators, also attended a 5 days refresher training workshops on organization and conduct of educational sessions for parents and caregivers in the three districts.

Challenges included poor law and order situation, and low motivation among FRC teams. The training coordinators struggled to mobilize FRC teams, and mentored them to become effective adult educators on parenting education. A vigilant and continuous follow-up of FRC activities and a strong sense of ownership of FRCs among IPs are needed.

Twenty two participants (M=11, F=11, target 25), including 16 government officials and 6 project staff, attended a 10-day training at AKU-IED in December, 2011, to explore the national ECE curriculum and current pedagogical trends in ECE, so that they would be better able to assist LTs and teachers in ECE activities. Two participants did not attend due to TA/DA issues, while one nomination was not received due to travel constraints.

In April, 2012, 43 (M=17, F=26, target 50) participants, including LTs and teachers, attended three weeks of a four week tailor made split course at AKU-IED, to familiarize themselves with the National Curriculum for ECE and learn to effectively implement it in schools for the better development of *kachi*, Class 1 and 2 students. The one-week field based component was also implemented in each district, with AKU-IED project staff doing classroom observations and providing feedback and support.

This course was particularly effective in developing the skills of teachers and LTs to conduct ECD classes and support ECD teachers with less or no training.

Output 5.2: Professional Development of ECD teachers, Government Officials & other Professionals

The project planned to enroll 12 participants (6 from IPs and 6 from government departments) in the 18 months Advanced Diploma in Human Development offered by AKU-HDP. However, only 11 nominations were received, 8 qualified the enrolment criteria and took up the online component of the course, but only 6 appeared in the face to face component. These six students are working on their work-based projects, but they did not comply with the deadlines of online assignments.

The project also planned to train 25 teacher educators and education managers in the Certificate in Education ECED course at AKU-IED. However, the Chief of PPIU could not provide the required number

of nominations; the reasons given were that they could not spare staff, and a number of staff had already received training in Pakistan and abroad.²⁶ Secondly, most nominated candidates did not meet the minimum requirement of 50% marks in their last academic examination. Therefore the project also received nominations from ADEOs, head teachers and senior school teachers who the GoB selected as potential master trainers. Ultimately 23 participants were selected, and 20 (M=14, F=6) attended the Phase 1 (Face to Face) of the Certificate in Education ECED course at AKU-IED, which of course started after considerable delay. Three participants could not attend due to their personal and official commitments.

Unfortunately no participant could avail of the two M.Ed seats at AKU-IED, as none of the applicants passed the admission test, despite attending a one month preparatory course at AKU-IED.

Output 5.3: Stakeholders sensitized to the ECD practices through exposure visits

Twenty five participants, including 9 government officials, 8 lead teachers, 6 project staff, and 2 AKF (P) staff, visited 7 schools in Gilgit and Hunza during June-July, 2012 to learn about ECD best practices and replicate them in the ECDP project schools. **The visit was an eye opener for the participants, and played a key role in converting them to the ECD concept and approach.** Participants realized that ECD was different from regular teaching; younger children needed special care, nurturing, space, safety, and physical settings (e.g. Learning Corners). They also appreciated the role of community support, but expressed the concern that they did not have such qualified teachers and such community support in their own schools. Some government officials, who had been opposing the project, underwent a marked change and became much more accessible and respectful to project staff. None of the officials participating in the exposure trip has ever said that they did not know about any component of the ECD project. **The deep and positive impact of the trip justifies the view that the trip should have been organized earlier.**

Outcome 6. ECD Policy and Practice influenced

Output 6.1: Research conducted to understand various ECD related themes

AKU-HDP organized a detailed household baseline survey in the catchment areas of the FRC to identify families who could benefit from its services. The survey teams had to face a host of problems during data collection, including non-responsive or aggressive community members, expectation of material benefits by respondents, dangerous security situation in Quetta, performance and behavioral problems of the Quetta field team, and high turnover of data collectors (especially Quetta and to some extent in Gwader) due to a variety of reasons. Despite all these challenges the data collection was completed in June, 2012, and the data entry of 2880 children was in progress during the MTR. In addition qualitative data on five themes (nutrition, child development, MMH, inclusion and ANC) was collected through FGDs, which were transcribed and analyzed, and drafts of each theme were prepared for review. Because of the large sample size and double entry process the research team was struggling to meet its

²⁶ For example, many teacher educators from Balochistan attended a three month course in teaching of maths, science and English in USA during 2004 and 2005. See Jaffer and Jaffer. Impact Assessment of Pakistan Teacher Education and Professional Development Program, AED/USAID, 2006

deadline. Volunteers were identified and engaged to expedite the work. During the MTR we saw the instruments used during the survey and met the data processing team at the HDP data s, and were quite impressed by the **high quality and depth of the instruments, the thoroughness with which the survey was carried out, and the data entered.**

Output 6.2: Case studies carried out to assess the impact of the project intervention and ECD best practices disseminated

Proposals for one action and one formative research studies were shared by AKU-HDP with IPs, teachers, and students, who were orientated about their roles in the study. A review of these proposals revealed that they were methodologically sound, and were likely to produce useful findings which could feed into practices in this and other projects. So far boys and girls volunteer groups have been formed and educated on three themes: immunization, health and hygiene and nutrition. They would be sharing new knowledge within their social circles and the lead researcher of AKU-HDP would follow this up for documentation.

Output 6.3: ECD Advocacy and Dialogue

A concept note on district level ECD awareness seminars has been shared with AKF (P) and all partners. Material for these seminars is under development and design phase. Another concept note on ECD awareness programme on local FM radio has been developed in consultation with a radio programmer as part of the Formative Research proposal, which has been shared with all partners. Seven volunteer Community Resource Groups (male and female) have been formed from within the FRC catchment areas. These groups are extensively oriented on ECD concepts. They were facilitated to develop advocacy and awareness messages for larger community groups. These messages will be broadcast on local FM and Radio Pakistan. More so, AKU-HDP and IPs are also working with a film producer and a theatre group for development of scripts on ECD advocacy and awareness.

2.3. Efficiency

We have already mentioned the great delays in the project by over one year due to: a long delay in the approval of the project by the government; delayed construction due to unwillingness of contractors to work in the hostile political and security environment of Balochistan, resulting in delays in purchase of furniture; delays in the first school baseline due to changes in selected projected schools, and delays in the second baseline due to the delayed approval by the government, which was reluctant to survey schools without providing them any facilities.

One reason for the long delay in hiring teachers was the poor coordination between the PPIU, the Directorate, and the district authorities. There is a lack of clarity regarding the roles of the PPIU, and the Directorate feels that the PPIU is stepping on their toes. For example, the PPIU said that it would notify the PTSMCs and hire the teachers, whereas the Directorate said that it was their job. When the Directorate prepared the merit list of teachers, the PPIU Deputy Focal Person (who is a junior officer) objected to some of the selections, which was ultimately over rules by the Additional Secretary Education. In this turf war, students, teachers and schools suffered.

Due to the delays in a large number of activities there has been great under-spending in the project to date. However, we did not receive any data on project budgets or financial expenditures, so we are not in a position to comment on the utilization of funds.

Despite all the risks and delays, and the worsening political and security environment, the project did not give up hope or abandon the venture. Rather it persevered, and picked up activities from wherever they had stopped or got stuck, and moved them inch by inch to some outcome. After great effort, the project got the government to finally notify the hiring of teachers in Quetta and Qilla Saifullah districts in November, 2012. The project was also able to convince a contractor to take on the risky assignment of construction of classrooms and LRCs, and is presently working out an arrangement regarding the number and size of the classrooms, and the structures to be used. Considering the delays and escalation of costs, pre-fabricated structures are being proposed for Quetta and Qilla Saifullah because of their lower cost, less time for setting up, and seismic resistance technology. Traditional structures are being proposed for Gwader, as the saline climate is likely to damage steel structures.

IPs have experienced some problems due to their capacity constraints in areas like classroom observation and monitoring. For example, the IPs lack the technical knowledge to assess Active Learning in the classroom. The project plans to develop this skill by organising training for IP monitoring staff.

2.4. Gender Equality

Generally projects in Pakistan, and particularly in a province like Balochistan, face the problem of low participation of women in project activities. In this project, however, the situation was just the opposite. Most participants (1173 out of 1321) benefiting from training programmes and education sessions were women (see Annexure 5). Similarly 48 of the 75 project schools were girls' schools, and only 27 were boys' schools. We also found a large number of girls in boys' schools, where girls' schools did not exist or were at a distant. The huge increase in enrolments due to the start of ECD classes has mainly benefited girls. **This is an excellent achievement of the project, and is likely to sustain, since it is not like the provision of oil or some other incentive which ends after the money dries up²⁷.**

So can we conclude that the project is high on gender inequality, and low on gender equality? We would rather say that the project has been able to redress an imbalance which is prevalent in most projects in Pakistan, and in particular in Balochistan.

2.5. Monitoring & Evaluation

Previously AKF had been involved in grant management with responsibility for oversight level M&E activities, not hard core M&E for direct programme implementation. EDIP and ECDP are the first projects where AKF took on the role of a technical back stopper, shifting from a project oversight to a project implementation role, with monitoring, evaluation and research as a central function. The change in AKF's role was not easy, since, on the one hand, it had to develop internal capacity in MER, and secondly, it had to change the mind-set of its partners, who for years had been used to a hands-off approach to M&E by AKF.

²⁷ During the AKU-HDP survey in Quetta some schools had to be dropped, because their enrollments had gone down after the ceasing of provision of benefits to parents.

In order to implement its changed role, AKF adopted a System Development Process (SDP). It developed an MIS for both EDIP and B-ECDP, to keep track of all the indicators which, at the same time, would be usable by all the partners in a timely and coordinated fashion to provide real time data to all implementing partners. It includes school profiles, teacher training activities, school infrastructure, and other project components, with gender-disaggregated data available where possible. Each partner collects data using a standard monitoring format provide by AKF (P). The format is very systematic and comprehensive. Each partner has 3 to 7 users of the MIS. All users have read access, but only the M&E officer of each partner has write access. The latter are allowed to update the MIS between the 16th of each month to the 6th of the next month, after which the system is locked. Initially AKF allowed unlocking for a few days to address mistakes in data, but this practice has been discontinued. Document sharing application, a component of the MIS, allows partners to upload and download project related documents.

Each partner prepares a quarterly report latest by one month after the end of a quarter, including a draft and final report. They also prepare an annual report within one month of the end of the year. AKF prepares consolidated bi-annual and annual reports for submission to AusAID and other stakeholders. AKF (P) also submits Quality at Implementation Report to AusAID for the period January – December each year. AKF also uses a GIS system which shows the location of schools in each cluster, including LRC and feeder schools. The GIS and MIS are linked. AKF plans to develop a separate, more detailed, GIS. Future plans regarding the MIS include adding community and infrastructure profiles, and sharing the MIS with the GB government.

The two project baselines of intervention and control schools have collected very useful baseline data, though their validity may have been compromised by the fact that the control group data was collected late in the project.²⁸ A more serious issue is weaknesses in the vertical and horizontal logic of the log frame. For example, the same indicators are used at the purpose and goal level (e.g. enrollment, retention, dropout rates) or purpose and output level (e.g. ECD infrastructure), indicators lack QQT (e.g. positive attitudes towards gender equality, increased student-teacher interaction), there is a breakdown in horizontal logic (e.g. meetings with heads is an indicator of increased capacity of Head); some assumptions are written as risks; GoB LF lacks vertical logic, and has weak indicators. The weakness in understanding the vertical and horizontal logic of logframes is also reflected in the way partners use logframe indicators in their reporting. It is heartening to note that AKF (P) and EDIP partners, in collaboration with the MTR team, is revising the log frame in order to remove most of the weaknesses in vertical and horizontal logic. In line with AusAID guidelines for preparation of log frames, output and intermediate result indicators are being revised, and indicators at the goal and purpose level are also being streamlined.

More importantly, the project log frame has **no indicator for learning achievement**. For example, the indicators for 'Improved learning environment in ECD classes' and 'active learning demonstrated' include increase in retention rates, teacher-student interaction, number of co-curricular activities, and student participation, but do not include learning achievement. Because of this gap the PMF lacks learning achievement indicators, the baseline data did not assess either the reading or writing skills of children, and the monitoring visits and classroom observations focus on identifying Active Learning but not on assessing learning outcomes.

²⁸ The control schools survey was delayed due to ethical considerations by the government, as the survey was likely to raise the expectations of the communities to get ECDP interventions.

In order to keep a vigilant check on FRC progress and functions by respective IP project teams and to deal with parents' expectation, AKU-HDP developed seven checklists with Urdu translation in consultation with IPs. These checklists are: Session Plan checklist, Parents/Caregivers' Invitation, Attendance Checklists, Parents/Caregivers Feedbacks checklist, Sessions Evaluation Checklist for Facilitator, Sessions Evaluation Checklist for representative of IPs, TPs and AKFP, and Monthly Reporting checklist. Project Managers and FRC Coordinators of respective IPs are using these checklists for proper documentation of FRC activities. We reviewed these checklists and found them to be very comprehensive. We were also impressed by the revised format developed by the Female FRC Coordinator in Gwader. The same should be reviewed by HDP and other IPs for possible adoption.

During school visits we found that each IP was using their own format on their monitoring visits. It might be more useful for AKU-IED to provide them with a standard format, which may be modified by the IP as per their requirements. IP project staff will also need some training in conducting observations of ECD classes.

We also read a Process Monitoring report conducted by the MER Programme Officer in Gwader in late September, 2012. The report gave a good description of the issues, and possible solutions. In the next report, by which time the project would have made some headway, one would expect to see more information on the teaching-learning environment in classrooms.

2.6. Sustainability

Since the project has started working in schools only a few months ago, it is too early to talk about project sustainability. However, in a number of schools that we visited, we have seen excellent examples of Active Learning in classrooms, despite a short period of project intervention in schools. For example, a teacher in Muslim Bagh is using ECD methods and materials in Class 3 after being trained by the LT. The key to sustaining change at the school level is to strengthen and support the LT and the head teacher, and the project will have to work closely with the government to provide them necessary support.

Though a number of government heads and teachers have received high quality training and mentoring both in schools and in AKU-IED, and some government officials have also benefited from training, the government has been extremely slow in approving the project, and in recruiting teachers. On the positive side the government has implemented some components of the provincial ECD plan, including hiring ECD teachers, even though at present their salaries are paid by the project. The government has committed to take these teachers on their payrolls once the project ends. During the meeting with senior DoE officials the Secretary Education laid a great stress on mentoring. The PPIU is prioritising and costing the ECD component for future support. The project needs to capitalise on these initial proposals and possibilities, though it will be a long drawn out process.

Health education in Pakistan has for years been a fatherless baby, since the education department considers it a health issue, while the health department considers it an educational issue. Both are, of course, partially correct, since it requires a collaborative effort of both departments, which government departments are not particularly famous for achieving. Since the education department faces enough difficulties in coordinating between its own different wings (e.g. between the PPIU, the Directorate, and the district), it is too much to expect that the two departments will be able to develop and implement a

coordinated strategy to run the FRC after the project ends. We would suggest that the project should not even think of this option, which is a non-starter. Instead the project should focus on options which have a greater chance of flying. Some suggestions are given in the last chapter.

2.7. Lessons Learnt

This section focuses on what should be done in designing and implementing a similar programme, rather than what course corrections need to be made in the second half of the project. The latter is dealt with in the last section on recommendations.

Some of the lessons emerging from the review are:

- Schools should be identified very carefully to avoid including schools which have an-ongoing intervention similar to the project intervention (e.g. STEP programme, Save the Children).
- Alternative strategies need to be in place when key interventions are at risk and likely to affect all project activities
- The process of selecting candidates for AKU-IED courses should begin at least six months prior to the course. Preparatory courses need to be provided to candidates to facilitate the possibility of securing seats in M.Ed and Advanced Diploma programmes.
- Exposure trips should be organized early in the life of the project, in order to win over key stakeholders, including government officials, and streamline the process of project implementation
- The time frame for the project was too short to start with, and was further cut due to abnormal delays. At least a five year period should be available to entrench and institutionalise education projects, particularly those focusing on children's learning.
- The decision to give an extension to the project should have been taken after the government took one whole year to approve the project. This would have helped the project to plan its activities as a three year, rather than a two year project.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1. Conclusions

Despite all the problems and challenges faced by the project, ECDP-B has managed to get on track to achieving its results. This is evident from the positive findings in a number of classrooms during our school visits in the three districts. The FRCs are also making good headway, despite a difficult start, and are creating a constituency for the important messages that they are transmitting.

It is true that certain components of the project are more relevant than others, and the project will need to make an effort to modify certain components of the project to make them relevant to local needs.

In reviewing a project operating in such a difficult environment one cannot use the yardsticks which are applied to more enabling environments. Thus it would be quite unfair to compare this project with the EDIP project in GB, since the two regions are at opposite ends of the spectrum, and the ECDP is being implemented by non-AKDN partners. What is important is that all the stakeholders have acknowledged that ECDP classrooms are visibly different from normal classrooms.

The project has started picking up momentum, and it is crucial that this momentum is maintained during the coming months and years. In the next section we propose certain steps that the project can take to improve its performance, as well as take steps to institutionalise the gains that it has made, and is likely to make, during the remaining life of the project.

3.2. Recommendations

We have already discussed a number of steps that various stakeholders need to take to make the project more efficient, effective and sustainable during the remaining life of the project. For the convenience of the reader, the key recommendations of the review are summarized below by implementer and time frame²⁹:

- Approve extension of project end date to June, 2015 (AusAID; short term)
- Revise project log frame, PMF and WBS, and build capacity of partners in monitoring and reporting (AKF(P); short term)
- Organise exposure visits between FRC staff of districts for mutual learning (AKU-HDP, IPs, short-term)
- Facilitate monitoring of classrooms using standard checklist (IPs; short term)
- Develop capacities of LTs in teaching writing, developing low/no cost materials, organising storage spaces, implementing ECD in unfavourable circumstances (high student-teacher ratio, shortage of space, multi-grade teaching, splitting 3-5 years in separate groups, etc.), so that they may transfer these skills to teachers/IPs; research may be conducted on some of these aspects (AKU-IED; short term)
- Arrange sharing of learning and best practices between LTs (e.g. use of register to assess social, emotional and intellectual needs of each student) (AKF(P), IPs, short-term)
- Conduct TNA and organise training of FRC workers (either AKU-HDP or IPs; short term)
- Take steps to increase participation of women in PTSMCs (PTSMCs, IPs; short term)

²⁹ Short term (1-3 months), medium term (4-12 months); long term (year 2)

- Review the FRC monitoring format developed by the FRC Coordinator in Gwader, and consider possibilities for modification in existing formats (AKU-HDP, IPs; short term)
- Have the translation of ECD Teacher Guide and Manual re-done (AKU-IED; short term)
- Review the topics for conducting case studies, and initiate work on them (AKF(P); short term)
- Provide PTSMCs with new formats for writing meeting notes developed by IPs (IPs; short term)
- Explore the possibility of using ASER data of project districts and the learning outcomes data of STEP project in Qilla Saifullah and Quetta districts to assess impact of project on student learning outcomes (AKF(P); short to medium term)
- Assist PTSMCs to form cluster level PTSMCs to increase their capacity to address common issues (IPs, PTSMCs; short to medium term)
- Identify/develop and provide standardized lesson plans for Class 1 and 2 incorporating the use of ECD approach and materials primary (AKU-IED; medium term)
- Identify skill training needs of women visiting FRCs, and arrange need-based skill training (AKU-HDP, IPs; medium term)
- Support the community to form Management Committees to gradually take over the management of the FRC (AKU-HDP, IPs; medium term)
- Explore the possibilities of collaboration with PITE and Colleges of Education (for professional development of heads and teachers) by building their capacity through the M.Ed and advanced Diploma programmes at AKU-IED (AKF (P), DoE, PITE, AKU-IED; medium to long term)
- Facilitate/support LCs to take on learning support roles (DoE, AKU-IED; medium to long term)
- Negotiate with the GoB to include ECD running costs, including staff salaried, in recurring budget (AKF(P); long term)

Annexures

1. Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEO	Assistant Education Officer
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKF(P)	Aga Khan Foundation Pakistan
AKU–HDP	Aga Khan University-Human Development Programme
AKU–IED	Aga Khan University-Institute for Educational Development
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BESP	Balochistan Education Sector Plan
BHU	Basic Health Unit
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CM	Community Mobilizer
CPE	Continuous Professional Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDE	Deputy Director Education
DEO	District Education Officer
DO	Director of Education
DoE	Directorate of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECED	Early Childhood Education & Development
ECDP	Education Development and Improvement Programme
EFA	Education For All
ELM	Educational Leadership & Management
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBPS	Government Boys Primary School
GBHS	Government Boys High School
GGHS	Government Girls High School
GGMS	Government Girls Middle School
GGPS	Government Girls Primary School
GoB	Government of Balochistan
HDP	Human Development Programme
HT	Head Teacher
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IDSP	Institute for Development Studies & Practices
IP	Implementing Partner
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LLI	Local Level Institution
LRC	Learning Resource Centre
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal

M.Ed	Masters in Education
MER	Monitoring Evaluation and Research
MIS	Management Information System
MOI	Memorandum of Intent
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PMF	Performance Monitoring Framework
PPIU	Policy, Planning and Implementation Unit
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTSMC	Parent-Teacher School Management Committee
RBM	Results Based Management
RCDC	Rural Community Development Council
RHC	Rural Health Centre
RS	Resource School
SDP	System Development Process
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
TE	Teacher Educator
TF	Taraqee Foundation
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
ToT	Training of Trainers
VEC	Village Education Committee
WBS	Work Breakdown Structure

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3. Terms of Reference



Terms of Reference

MID TERM REVIEW

A. Project Brief

- a) **Title:** Early Childhood Development Programme
- b) **Country:** Pakistan
- c) **Project Districts:** Quetta, Gwader & Qilla Saifullah
- d) **Duration:** July 2010 – June 2013
- e) **Financier:** AusAID
- f) **Implementing partners:**
 - (i) Taraqee Foundation, Balochistan
 - (ii) Institute for Development Studies and Practices, Balochistan
 - (iii) Rural Community Development Council, Balochistan
- g) **Technical Partners**
 - (iv) Aga Khan University – Human Development Programme
 - (v) Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development

B. Background

“Ensuring a Better Start in Life for Children” is an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programme of the Aga Khan Foundation (Pakistan) being executed in the selected areas of Balochistan province, and sponsored by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). These areas are the three districts named *Quetta*, *Qilla Saifullah* and *Gwader*. For the execution of this programme, the AKF (P) has collaborated with two technical partners – AKU-IED and AKU-HDP – and three implementing partners, one for each district: the Taraqee Foundation, RCDC, and IDSP. The programme is aimed at improving the accessibility, equity and quality of learning opportunity at the start of children’s life with an increase focus of interventions on females and marginalized communities. The programme gives special emphasis to increasing the stakeholder participation in the education sector, particularly those in the public sector. At the same time, involvement of local communities, civil society organizations and private sector is considered vital for the success of this programme.

The Programme activities proposed under ECDP will encompass key international commitments (such as the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All) but also the objectives and vision of Pakistan’s

National Education Policy 2009, the December 2006 White Paper, and be aligned with the Federal Government's Vision 2025 and Vision 2030.

The overall goal of the project is to 'Enhance Access, Equity and Quality of education for all with increased gender parity and participation and sustainability of community interventions'.

The programme focuses on three areas;

- Enhancement of the learning abilities of children in early years,
- Capacity development of key stake holders, and
- Increasing involvement of community in ECD interventions.

The programme intervenes in the government institutions only, with 75 primary schools being the target beneficiaries. As part of interventions, the ECD Class rooms will be established in each of these 75 schools along with the establishment of one Community Based Family Resource Centers in each district. The teachers recruited for these ECD Classes shall undergo rigorous trainings in the ECD Teaching methodologies. Apart from the ECD teachers, capacity development shall also take place of the education managers, government officials, and project staff. Their participation and timely support is critical to the success of the programme. The Project is a two way process and at the same time, it will benefit a number of teacher education institutions such as the Aga Khan University (AKU), and Government Teacher Training Institutions in its programme areas by building the capacity of present and aspiring faculty members. The project will also train (project staff) and will cadre a pool of individual on the ECD concept which they can replicate and use on their way forward.

C. Objectives of the Review

The Mid-Term Review (MTR), which has been suggested in the Financing Agreement of the Program, will provide AKF (P), implementing partners, government, donor and the wider public with sufficient information to:

- a) Assess the quality and progress in delivery of activity outputs and objectives
- b) Assess any issues or problems and their impact
- c) Assess the progress made towards achieving sustainable benefits, and
- d) Identify and document any refinements to the activity based on the recommendations

More specifically, the outcome of the MTR is to come up with lessons learnt and practical recommendations to improve project design and implementation strategy for the remaining project duration and any future actions. The MTR would also assess progress on the interventions for supporting the government institutions in developing their capacity to implement the GoB Education Strategy. Recommendations of the MTR will be validated by the Programme Steering Committee and final decisions will be taken by the AusAID.

D. Review Team

The MTR will involve, to an appropriate degree, all related parties. Effort will be made to keep the Review as independent of the implementation process as possible. The Review team will include:

- a) A representative nominated by the AusAID
- b) Program Manager, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research – AKF (P)
- c) A consultant, to be selected by AKF (P), with significant and relevant background in educational development
- d) Another consultant, to be selected by AKF (P) with significant experience in institutional development, project management and government systems

Education team at AKF (P) and staff of the implementing partners, as required, will work with the team as resource persons.

E. Methodology

Broadly speaking, the Review is expected to be quick, cogent, and qualitative as opposed to quantitative. The proposed methodology of the Review is as follows:

- (i) Analysis of project documents such as Funding Agreement Deed, Project Implementation Plan, Work Breakdown Structures, progress reports, implementation records, field visit report, baseline survey report etc.
- (ii) Analysis of the government documents such as Education Strategy by the Department of Education, GoB.
- (iii) Development of detailed work plan for the Review
- (iv) Meeting with the Programme staff to discuss implementation challenges and issues
- (v) Visits of Learning Resource Centers and selected feeder project schools to observe the current status of implementation. Facilitated sessions with communities, school staff, and students will be held
- (vi) Meetings with key staff of the government education department both at district and regional/provincial level and finance and P&D at the Regional/provincial level.
- (vii) Analysis of progress data and records
- (viii) Development of draft report against the Review objectives
- (ix) Sharing of draft report with AusAID and AKF(P) for feedback/comments
- (x) Finalization of the report after receiving feedback and comments

F. Structure of the Review

The review should focus on the following key themes:

- Relevance
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Sustainability
- Cross-cutting – gender and disability
- Government’s capacity development:
A separate focus should be on how this program is improving the capacity of the government in terms of human resource development and more specifically at the institutional level that could be sustained beyond project period. A special focus should be on how the program has progressed on improving governments planning, implementing and management capacities both at the district and the regional level.

More detail on thematic issues is given in the draft Report Outline, attached as Annex I.

Each theme should focus on the following areas

a) Performance

This section should review progress against the indicators given in the Performance Management Framework of the Programme. Relevance and target of interventions and efficiency issues such as timing and quality should be reviewed.

b) Factors Affecting Performance

Issues, problems, and challenges in the implementation process and those likely to affect impact should be documented here. To start with, the Review should look at the capacity constraints of the executing and implementing agencies. Any issues related to working with the GoB Government should be highlighted.

Next, the Team should list and analyse the potential effect of broader risk and sustainability factors such as Government policy changes, ownership by the Government and schools, other issues related to sustainability, gender and cultural factors, environmental factors, and political and economic factors.

c) Solutions Proposed

This section should propose clear and implementable solutions to problems, issues, and challenges identified. The solutions should propose changes in the design of the Program in terms of targeting, relevance of interventions, and recommendations related to quality of interventions, etc. Implications of the significant solutions in terms of resource re-allocation for interventions or quantum of the budget should be clearly highlighted.

d) Conclusions

Clearly list the recommendations and required decisions from the Programme Steering Committee and the AusAID with a proposed time table.

G. Qualification of Review Consultants

(i) Educational Development Specialist

The consultant is expected to have:

- At least Master's or equivalent qualification in education, childhood development, economics or related fields
- Proven record of at least 5 to 7 years of experience in the development field out of which at least 2 years has been gained in independent consultancy
- Proven record of leadership with education sector in general and early childhood development in particular in Pakistan or abroad
- Experience in management of development projects will be considered an asset

- Credible records and references of previous consulting experience in Pakistan
- Fluent in English language (written & spoken). Proficiency in local languages will be favoured.

The consultant will be paid in two instalments for services and report, exclusive of his travel, boarding and lodging costs. AKF (P) staff and local partner in the field will provide logistical support for the exercise.

AKF (P) takes no liability for security risks related to the service.

H. Deliverables and Timing

The consultants, after initial discussions, will share a detailed work plan with stakeholders outlining steps for the Review process. The consultants will submit a well-organized and well-formatted report in English language in print and electronic version. Report outline will be finalized with the consultant during the initial discussions and before the finalization of the work plan.

The entire evaluation process will be completed within a period of one and a half month from the date of signing of the contract. Draft report will be submitted to AKF (P) within 1.5 months after the start of the work. The consultant will revise the report within 10 days after receiving comments from AusAID, AKF (P) and the partners. AKF (P) will be responsible for coordinating the comments on the draft report.

4. Review Methodology and Team

The steps involved in the review are outlined below:

- Analysis of project documents (1-30 November)
- Development of detailed work plan (1-2 November)
- Meeting with programme staff (Islamabad 1, Karachi 5-6, Gwader 7, Quetta 12, Qilla Saifullah 14 November)
- Visit to RS, LRCs and feeder schools, facilitated sessions with communities, school staff, and students, interview Lead Teachers (7-15 November)
- Meetings with key staff of government education department at district and provincial level (7-14 November)
- Analysis of progress data and records
- Debriefing with AusAID, technical and implementing partners³⁰ (Islamabad, 5 December)
- Development of draft report (2 January, 2013)
- Sharing of draft report with AusAID and AKF(P) for feedback/comments (January, 2013)
- Finalization of report after receiving feedback and comments (February, 2013)

The review team visited 22 schools, including 10 LRCs and 12 feeder schools in three districts, including the following:

District Gwader: (10 schools)

- **Cluster 1: LRC GBPS Gazarwan**, GGPS Gazrwan, GBPS Kauda Ahmed Muhalla, GBPS Sohrabi, GBPS Umar bin Khattab, GGPS Kummadi Ward, *GGPS Zerbahar Colony*,
- **Cluster 2: LRC GBPS Kappari Muhalla Surbander**, GGPS Kappari Muhalla
- **Cluster 3: LRC GBPS Brisi Ward, Pishutar, Pishukan**

District Quetta: (9 schools)

- **Cluster 1: LRC GGPS University Colony**, GGMS Lore Karez Ghonse Abad Muslim Itehad Colony, Quetta
- **Cluster 3: LRC GGPS BMC Colony**, *GGPS Ameenabad*, GGPS Tirkha Shirani, Quetta
- **Cluster 4: LRC GGPS Labour Colony, Nawa Killi, Quetta**
- **Cluster 5: LRC GGHS Samungli Jinnah Town, Quetta**
- **Cluster 6: LRC GGPS Dehwar Colony**, GGPS Phood Gali Chowk, Quetta

District Qilla Saifullah: (3 schools)

- **Cluster 1: LRC GGHS Town Qilla Saifullah**
- Cluster 2: GGPS Killi Kharkaran Haji Chakan Shah
- **Cluster 6: LRC GBPS New Sam Khail, Muslim Bagh**

In the schools the team observed the ECE materials, their accessibility and use, various activities, classroom teaching, interviewed heads, teachers and PTSMC members, and, where time permitted, randomly checked recognition, understanding, and writing skills of students.

During the consultation days, in between and after meetings, the review team conducted numerous discussions on topics to be covered in the review. Record notes were also prepared for all meetings,

³⁰ Officials of the Balochistan DoE were unable to attend the meeting.

interviews and FGDs. During the report writing phase, these notes were used to aggregate the feedback from all relevant respondents on each key topic. These aggregations of feedback by topic were then assessed (in light of materials reviewed in the desk study prior to the mission) and key findings prepared. Where respondents offered conflicting views, which was at times the case, the team attempted to verify the more accurate position based on feedback from multiple interviewees, assessment of the evidence provided, consideration of the background of the interviewees, follow up calls, etc.

The greatest limitations of our analysis were, perhaps, the limited timeframe for conducting the fieldwork, the interviews, FGDs and assessing results, and our inability to understand and speak the local language(s), which was critical in order to be able to communicate with young children, and understand classroom dynamics in schools and FRCs. The amount of time available in some schools (particularly those involving considerable travel time) was short, and did not allow the team to gather the amount of data which was possible in more accessible schools. Moreover, due to security concerns, some schools in Quetta had to be dropped, hence possibly curtailing the breadth of issues and nuances.

The review team consisted of the following members:

- Mr. Rafiq Jaffer, Consultant, Educational Development
- Ms. Razia Jaffer, Consultant, Educational Development
- Ms. Farah Huma, Programme Manager, ECDP – AKF(P)
- Ms. Shahnaz Mazhar, Assistant Programme Manager – AKF(P)

The team included a good mix of one female and one male external consultant who had extensive experience of conducting reviews and evaluations of education and other social sector projects, knowledge and hands-on experience of various components of the programme (e.g. need assessments and surveys; school management; capacity building of heads and teachers in school and classroom management, pedagogical skills and content knowledge; writing lesson plans; inclusive education; cluster based approaches; mentoring; manual development, etc.), and experience of working with most of the consortium partners. The external consultants were well complemented by the two AKF,P team members, who had both working knowledge of ECED, and were able to clarify and provide context to a lot of findings and issues. Unfortunately the AusAID representative could not join the team due to travel restrictions.

5. Gender Distribution of Participants of Project Workshops and Courses

Topic	Participants	
	Male	Female
LHWs, TBAs and <i>kachi</i> teachers attended 5 days training in basic ECD concepts	0	97
Lead Teachers (LTs) and teachers attended a 5-days training on National ECE Curriculum for <i>Kachi</i> , Class 1 and 2	23	49
LTs, IPs and Project Coordinator attended 10-days training on Mentoring, Leadership and Setting up LRC programme in ECD at AKU-IED	9	12
Head Teachers/In-Charge attended 5 days training on school management, leadership and mentoring skills	22	48
Parents attended ECD sessions at FRC	37	884
FRC staff, project managers, M&E Officers, ECE facilitators, and volunteers of IPs, attended 5 days workshop on ECD concepts, planning and organizing educational sessions for parents and caregivers, responsibilities of FRC coordinators and staff members, and FRC management and monitoring checklists	9	23
FRC staff, project managers, M&E Officers, and ECE facilitators, also attended a 5 days refresher training workshops on organization and conduct of educational sessions for parents and caregivers	6	17
16 government officials and 6 project staff, attended a 10-day training at AKU-IED in December, 2011, to explore the national ECE curriculum and current pedagogical trends in ECE	11	11
LTs and teachers, attended three weeks of a four week tailor made split course at AKU-IED, to familiarize themselves with the National Curriculum for ECE and learn to effectively implement it in schools	17	26
ADEOs, head teachers and senior school teachers attended the Phase 1 (Face to Face) of the Certificate in Education ECED course at AKU-IED	14	6
Total	148	1173