

Project Information

- Country: Pakistan
- Project Name: Non-Formal Education Promotion Project/Advancing Quality Alternative Learning Project
- Cooperation Period: July 2011–March 2015/
September 2015–October 2019
- Implementing Organizations: Ministry of Federal Education and Profession Training, Literacy and NFBE Dept. Punjab, Education and Literacy Dept. Sindh, Social Welfare, Special Education Literacy and Non Formal Education Department. Balochistan

1. Project Summary and Background

(1) Background

In Pakistan, approximately 30% of school-aged children do not attend primary schools, and 60% of non-attendees are females, totaling to 3.3 million. This number includes children who have never attended school and those who dropped out of school. The adult literacy rate of people aged 15 years and above is 56%, which is the lowest level in South Asia, while the female literacy rate is 42%. Eliminating gender disparities in education has become an urgent issue. (UNESCO, 2016)

(2) Non-Formal Education as a Second Chance

Non-formal education that takes place outside formal school education allows more flexibility in establishing schools, which provides easier access to classrooms close to homes. As tuition fees are free, only a minimal economic burden is imposed on households. In Pakistan, where many people have no access to educational opportunities due to geographical and economic reasons, non-formal education has been adopted as an effective means to provide children and adults with a second chance of learning. Non-formal education also provides educational opportunities for many women who have no access to education.

(3) Project Summary

The JICA has cooperated for the development and expansion of the non-formal education system in Punjab, a province with the largest population in Pakistan, since 2004. As a result, approximately 820,000 people, 70% of who are women, have benefitted from educational opportunities. (JICA, 2014: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014).

This project offers programs according to target learners and learning needs as follows.

i) Non-formal primary school

For children aged 5 to 14 years who cannot attend school, education equivalent to formal primary school education is provided in 3 years and 4 months to pave the way to the next level of education.

ii) Adult literacy class

A 6-month adult literacy class is held for adolescents and adults aged 15 to 34 years, many of them are women.

The learning contents are as follows:

- ✓ **Improving basic literacy skills:** Urdu, Mathematics, and functional English.

- ✓ **Acquiring life skills:** Acquiring skills useful in everyday life, including Islamic education, rights and responsibilities, health and nutrition, family management, mother and child care, and disaster prevention.
- ✓ **Saving money and improving income:** Improving money-saving skills and income by preparing guides for household management and each business sector.

In September 2015, the JICA started a new project to strengthen the non-formal education system (policy, implementation, management system, etc.) to expand JICA's cooperation results of the past to the central Ministry of Education and other provinces, including Balochistan and Sindh provinces.

2. Basic Education in Pakistan from a Gender Perspective

In Pakistan, many girls cannot receive education because of the cultural climate in the country that does not allow them to go outside their homes and communities and because of poverty. Many of them give up attending a school due to the long distance from their home to the school or because schools do not have girls' toilets even if they are within commuting distance. Poor families give priority to boys' education than girls' education, and many girls who need to engage in agricultural labor and taking care of their younger brothers and sisters lose educational opportunities.

3. Initiatives from a Gender Perspective

In this project, the JICA has developed learning environment standards incorporating gender perspectives, assessment tools to measure learning proficiency, and curriculums and teaching materials reflecting learners' living needs.

For example, to actively encourage female participation, this project has adopted a "doorstep approach," which holds classes near their homes. This provides easy access to education for women who have no educational opportunities due to geographical reasons. They also feel comfortable attending classes taught by female teachers they know.

"My Book" created based on the maternal and child health handbook in Japan is used as a teaching material to learn how to read and write in a diary. Their identities are also checked through the process of filling in personal information, such as their name, birth date, and family situation. Learning to read and write gives confidence to women and gives them ability to proactively resolve unequal practices and norms they face.

This project brought about various positive changes in women who joined non-formal primary school and adult literacy class. Through learning, they became confident in themselves, increased their interest in social issues, and actively participated in society. The process of learning triggered by literacy leads to acquiring the "power to live" in society. This project contributes to the empowerment of girls and women by providing basic education.

<References>

- Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2016: 411, 455)
- Final Evaluation Study Report on Non-Formal Education Promotion Project (JICA, 2014: 15)
- Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) White Paper 2014 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014: 37)