

Empowering Girls-Transforming Communities – Project Status and Road Map 2011-2012

1- Brief Introduction

1.1 Project Objectives:

The broader objectives of the project are to:

- Develop adolescent girls' Life Skills to deal with SRH issues among their peers, families, and communities;
- Empower adolescent girls and build their confidence and leadership skills for social and economic independence; and
- Establish support networks in schools and communities to advocate improvements in SRH indicators and relevant policies - youth, health and education policies.

1.2 Duration: 3 years (Oct 2009- Oct 2012)

1.3 Target Districts: Sanghar (Sindh) & Gujranwala (Punjab)

1.4 Implementing Partners: SAFWCO (Sanghar) & Bargad (Gujranwala)

1.5 Project Targets

District	Gujranwala, Punjab	Sanghar, Sindh
Setting	Mixed Rural & Urban	Pure Rural
No of Higher Secondary schools	30	20
No. of Mater Trainers	10	8
No. of Teachers	170	80
No. of adolescent girls students	14000	8000
No. of girls in communities	7000	3000
No. of parents	25000	15000

2- Project Status- District Sanghar

2.1 Project Progress

Reference to the review and planning meeting held with Implementing Partner (SAFWCO), in district Sanghar, on July 08th, 2011, the project is running smoothly and the Implementing Partner received great appreciation with regards to whole of school events organized on International Women' day comprising of themes on early marriages, discrimination and girls leadership. In Sanghar, 19 schools have been able to complete the course, wherein the 8th grade has an enrolment of 1788 girl students. Teachers and students both are involved in frequent follow ups with SAFWCO on implementation of economic empowerment course with grade 9.

2.2 Challenges

- A few right wing media organizations and media reporters negatively portrayed the project. However the crisis was timely managed and contained by SAFWCO's senior management who swiftly curbed the impact of the press coverage through clarifications to media and district govt. EDO Education remained very supportive throughout this time.
- Inadequate enrolment in high schools is another challenge. The initial estimates were based on the data provided by EDO offices of the respective districts; however, the actual enrolment in schools was far less than expected. The project estimated a target of 8,000 adolescent girls who would be taught LSC during two years by taking 4000 girls on board each year. However, due to less

enrolment, the project could only reach 1900 enrolled students of grade 8, out of which a total of 1788 adolescent girls completed their LSC workbooks completely.

2.3 Recommendations / Suggestions

- Due to community resistance in few of the schools, SAFWCO team suggested the name of the project be changed, few sentences & words should be altered, and the removal of the chapters on Nikkah Nama (marriage agreement) and on HIV/AIDs from LSC workbook.
- SAFWCO team also suggested initiating extensive media sensitization and engagement process to avoid such crisis in future.
- Regular engagement of District Govt Sanghar and endorsement of MoU with Provincial govt in the wake of devolution.

3- Project Status Gujranwala:

3.1 Project Progress

With reference to review and planning meeting held with Bargad on July 02, 2011, in District Gujranwala, the project progress is as follows:

- A total of 8 Master Trainers and 140 teachers received training on Life Skills in 2010.
- A total of 15 girls' schools have been able to complete the entire LSB workbooks with an enrolment of 2000 girls' students in grade 8.
- About 2000 girls of 15 other schools completed 8 lessons until April, 2011.
- A total of 25 whole of school activities were carried out in District Gujranwala on the international day of women in which 201 parents and 500 teachers participated along with the students.

3.2 Challenges

Gujranwala is a big district with 2.5 million people and is to a certain extent under the influence of right wing extremist religious leaders.

The crisis started out with objections on some of the contents of workbook and through the involvement of the right wing media organizations that published negative articles and tried to defame the project and Bargad by labelling it as a "sex education programme".

The situation led to formation of Chief Minister's inquiry committee led by Raja Anwar, Chairman Punjab Education Foundation.

The Committee suggested halting of the LSB curriculum implementation in schools wef June 4, 2011.

With emergence of these crises in Gujranwala, 3 schools refused teaching LSB, and 17 schools dropped LSB curriculum after completing 8 lessons of the workbook with grade 8.

3.3 Opportunities:

The district government, Commissioner, DCO and EDO remained supportive towards Rutgers WPF and Bargad during this time in spite of the situation deteriorating into a 'law and order' situation in the district. The DCO Gujranwala, in particular, has shown great interest in the continuation of this project. He suggested exploring alternative strategies for implementing EGTC in Gujranwala without compromising on the outcome of the project through a review of the contents of the workbook to make it culturally appropriate and in line with religious norms.

Chief Secretary Punjab was quite sympathetic with regards to the state of affairs and advised DCO to find ways for the continuation of the project with the assurance that all the stakeholders are engaged in reviewing the project materials.

Planning and review meeting was held on July 2, 2011, in which it was mutually decided to review the project strategy without giving up or compromising on the project objectives. Although certain religious leaders held a series of processions to malign Bargad's name and its work, in spite of this, the project staff is very positive and determined in realizing the project objectives. They reviewed the administrative constraints and contextualized the project implementation strategy in order to ensure that the project targets will be fulfilled.

DCO gave advice on the current situation and informed Rutgers WPF and Bargad that the matter is now under review by the provincial government and Rutgers WPF has to approach provincial govt of Punjab and Chairman Punjab Education Foundation (Mr. Raja Anwar) for the purpose of seeking their approval on the project materials. He indicated his full support in approaching the provincial govt and also advised to mobilize civil society Punjab contacts to address the issue.

3.4 Recommendations / Suggestions by Bargad and DCO

- There is a need to repackage the project with a revised strategy for its continued implementation in the district.
- Revising course contents and eliminating sensitive topics from workbooks. The topics on puberty, communicable disease and family planning should only be taught to girls of grades 9 and 10.
- Developing Media mobilization strategy to build media understanding on life skills education and health issues of adolescent girls.
- More investment on MTs - Intensive trainings shall be arranged for MTs on LSB modules so that they could convincingly conduct teachers' trainings and handle critical questioning of the teachers.
- Resistance from religious leaders & community could be managed by putting relevant Islamic references in workbook and changing the name of the project as Empowering Girls does not go well with local communities.

4- Project Road Map 2011-12

4.1 Repackaging EGTC: "Aaghee se Aagay"

Shifting the focus of project from LSC to Girls economic and social empowerment & leadership, which are more practical and acceptable particularly for the community of Gujranwala, will dilute the impact of "sex education" and will also provide flexibility in integrating key messages of Life Skills by merging the (Life Skills course) LSC and Girls Economic Empowerment (GEE) sessions to form one course of total 24 sessions. It is also noteworthy that schools which dropped the course in the middle are open towards implementation of GEE component both in district Gujranwala and Sanghar. Under EGTC project, Empowerment Thru Creative Integration (ECI) has been taken on as Consultant for the development of Girls Economic Empowerment component. Training Need Assessment (TNA) has been conducted in both Sanghar and Gujranwala, with the aim to assess the current gaps in knowledge, skill and attitude of the target audience. Based on the TNA, ECI is developing the component of girls' economic empowerment.

Rutgers WPF & ECI both have agreed on integration of workbook of LSE and GEE. MoU has been signed with ECI on workplan and both teams are in the process of finalizing new workbooks and teachers manual.

Salient features of the revised strategy are;

- Revisiting workbook contents, taking out sensitive topics from workbook i.e HIV/AIDs, Family Planning, Nikkah Nama and Puberty Renaming EGTC project with “Aaghee se Aagay” . Four chapters of SRHR i.e, communicable diseases, family planning and puberty will be introduced to students of class 9 and 10 through whole of schools and other activities by engaging Punjab Aids Control Programme, Health professionals and collaborating with Hepatitis Control Programme.
- Renaming curriculum title with “ Khawaab se Tabeer Tak” with a tagline of “*nojawano ki samaji aur moasahi taraqi ka marboot programme*”
- Making Girls Empowerment Toolkit ‘Choti Ustani’, a part of curriculum and introducing it as a practical exercise based on peer education. The two components of the toolkit including the board game and stories will be designed on ideas of economic empowerment and social skills. (1 girl will reach out to 12 peers of her community through the board game and to her parents/ guardians through two different reverse education stories)
- The new curriculum ‘Khawaab se Tabeer tak’ is proposed to be taught to grades 8, 9 and 10 in the year 2011 & 2012 to address the enrolment challenges appearing particularly in district Sanghar. It is observed that in high schools, grades 9 and 10 typically have a large number of students. *Please refer to a table “Khawaab se Tabeer Tak” - Implementation Plan: From year 2011-2012 to view students’ targets and course implementation timeline.*
- To implement the course with 3 classes requires 2 additional trainings of 50 new teachers along with the training of 220 LSC teachers. Now a total 10 training workshops will be carried out in both districts for 270 teachers. In August 2011, trainers from ECI & Rutgers WPF will provide training to 270 teachers on the new curriculum “Khawaab se Tabeer Tak” having key messages embedded with GEE sessions. Implementation of the course will start from Sep 15, 2011 in the schools of both districts and teachers will take sessions twice a week on “Khawaab se Tabeer Tak”.
- To get support for full curriculum implementation, a competitive incentive plan will be introduced for school management in consultation with DCOs and IPs of respective districts. Two rounds of incentives for top 3 schools will be chosen and the incentive announcement will be linked with the event of Adolescent Girls Leadership Summit to be held immediately after implementation of “Khawaab se Tabeer Tak” in schools. 250 selected adolescent girls will be chosen from both district (100 from Sanghar) and 150 from (Gujranwala) to participate in these summits. 2 summits will be arranged in each district (first summit: Dec 2011, second Summit: June 2011).

4.2 Media Mobilization Strategy:

To positively tackle the negative media coverage and to showcase the positive side of LSB Education, a comprehensive media mobilization strategy has been developed and launched in Gujranwala & Sanghar by engaging an expert journalist, Mr. Masud Alam, to develop and run a concerted and sustained media campaign. As a first step towards its implementation, a media handling training workshop for project staff of Rutgers WPF took place on July 4, 2011, in Islamabad. The project team of SAFWCO was also

trained in a similar workshop held on July 19, 2011, in Hyderabad. The workshop on how to deal with media effectively for the project staff of Bargad will be arranged on 28th July 2011 in Gujranwala. Beside that two media workshops were planned for district Sanghar and Gujranwala.

The purpose of the media mobilization strategy is to create an enabling environment for SRHR through effective and meaningful engagement of Media so as to initiate a positive discourse on the subject of Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights in Pakistan. The media workshop for district Sanghar carried out on July 19, 2011 in Hyderabad was attended by 40 media representatives. The media workshop for 21 media representative will be arranged in Gujranwala on July 28, 2011.

Different mainstream and local media channels and publications will be used to run a concerted campaign on the benefits of life skills education & to raise awareness at grass root level. English and Urdu language national newspapers and periodicals, Sindhi language papers, FM radio channels in Karachi, Hyderabad, Gujranwala, and Islamabad, and mainstream TV talk shows in both English and Urdu will be used to advocate Life skills education with policy makers and to educate masses.

Khawaab se Tabeer Tak - Implementation Plan: From year 2011-2012			
Gujranwala:Course implementation rounds	Students undertaking Khawaab se Tabeer Tak Course (Twice a week)	No. of students (approx)	No. of Schools
Round 1: Sep 2011-Dec 2012	Grade 9 th & 10 th	4000+4000=8000	30 (including schools which completed LSC & schools which partially taught LSC)
Round 2: Apr 2012-Jun 2012	Grade 8 th & 9 th	2000 + 4000=6000	
Sanghar: Course implementation rounds	Students undertaking Khawaab se Tabeer Tak Course (Twice a week)	No. of students (approx)	No. of Schools
Round 1: Sep 2011-Dec 2012	Grade 9 th & 10 th	1700+2000 = 3700	20 Public schools (schools which completed LSC & schools which dropped out LSC)
Round 2: Apr 2012-Jun 2012	Grade 8 th & 9 th	2000+2000 = 4000	

As such all project targets will be achieved by Dec 2012.

Note*

1. For the implementation of the above plan, Partners will undergo renewal of MoU with district Governments in order to carry out project activities with grades 8, 9 and 10 of Public schools and will also negotiate with the district governments for twice a week sessions in schools on integrated curriculum of ‘Khawaab se Tabeer Tak’
2. Rutgers WPF will seek no cost extension of 6 months from Packard Foundation for implementation of Programme “Aaghee se Aagay” in both the districts.
3. Project and course names will be finalized only after testing with adolescent girls and targeted communities & after receiving feedback from Implementing Partners, District Government and Packard Foundation.