

# READ Foundation- Pakistan



Summary of READ Foundation and its work to improve  
quality of education in resource poor Pakistan

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## SUMMARY

Education is the most important developmental tool and requires special attention by the government and non-government sectors alike for growth and development. This fact is evident from the statistics of developed and under-developed countries as all poor countries have low literacy rates. Pakistan is also among the list of developing countries where education has never been considered a major priority. This lack of focus by the government has created large gaps, therefore private sector has emerged as a leader in education over the past few years. However, private sector education providers have mostly concentrated on profits and they have presented education as a business, thus leaving behind millions of Pakistani children to attend low quality private and government schools or remain out of school.

READ Foundation is a not-for-profit civil society organization working for quality education in rural areas of Pakistan. It is duly registered with the Government of Pakistan and is one of the top-rated NGOs certified by the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy for good practices in financial management, governance and Programme delivery.

Starting its operations with one teacher and only 25 children, READ Foundation has grown into one of the largest indigenous educational NGOs of Pakistan. Today, READ Foundation is running a cohesive network of 340 schools with an ever-growing student body of 75,642 children aided and nurtured by 4,102 teachers. READ Foundation provides free education to 7,192 orphaned students. It provides them with tuition fee, clothing and shoes, textbooks, stationery and knapsack. By establishing day and boarding schools of primary, secondary and higher secondary education near to their homes, READ Foundation enables them to pursue a bright future instead of turning into child labourers. In doing so, the Foundation is guided by the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

READ Foundation has developed a model of school system that has the ability to provide access to a wider group of underprivileged children in a country where over 25 million children are out of school. READ starts a school after proper need assessment and taking communities on board. Initially school opens with 25 children, one teacher and a room. The organization does not provide running costs of its schools and all its schools are running on self sustainable model. However, it provides support to its schools for growth and development as they increase access for the children. It provides teacher trainings, science laboratories, libraries and furniture for the growing needs of school whereas it also provide sponsorship for the poor orphans who attend these schools. Sustainable schools running on their own resources and receiving support for their development as per the need has proved to be most successful model of private schooling with charitable aims. It is the success of this organization that at present READ Foundation contributes about 35% in the enrolment of private schools in the Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

## BACKGROUND

Pakistan is one of eight countries worldwide that spend less than 2% of GDP on education. Public spending on education, a vital input for improvement in access and quality, is mere 1.5% of GDP. Female literacy is 45% against male literacy rate of 69%. On average 32%, 40.5% and 67.7% of rural girls aged 5-10, 10-14 and 15-19 respectively are out of school. Less than half of students ever complete primary school. The quality of education in the state-owned institutions has deteriorated considerably. Standards are only slightly better in the country's mushrooming private sector schools, but these are too expensive for most people. Poorer parents have tended to send their children to religious seminaries which offer free food and boarding to their students. Today, around 25 million children in Pakistan are denied their constitutional right to have an education up to the age of 16. Average literacy rate is only 57%. Inadequate access, low attendance and poorly trained teachers as well as weak supervision aggravate this abysmal situation.

Pakistan is a disaster prone country and it has been continuously hit by major disasters in the past 10 years. As a result of an earthquake on October 8, 2005, the estimate of school-age children and youth who perished in both AJK and NWFP was over 17,000. Most of the victims were between 4 and 16 years old, i.e. primary and secondary school students. Thousands of children have been wounded, made orphans or both—and almost all were traumatized. The earthquake claimed the lives of many teachers as well. More than 10,000 schools were destroyed or damaged beyond repair in the affected region. More than 955,000 children of school age were affected by the earthquake. Recent floods in 2010 and 2011 also caused serious damages to the education infrastructure of Pakistan. The developing situations in Pakistan have always demanded an emphasis on education from state and non-state actors. There is no doubt that education is a key to solve many important issues confronting any society and it becomes top rated priority for countries like Pakistan.

READ Foundation is a not-for-profit civil society organization that started its operations with one teacher and only 25 children in the year 1994. The organization was formed with the mission of helping society through quality-oriented, value-based and purposeful education and capacity building. It is steadily translating its slogans into action by providing equal opportunities of a quality education to every child. It has now grown up as one of the largest indigenous educational NGOs of rural Pakistan, with an enrolment of 70,000+ children in its 340 schools with 3,450 teachers. Working in partnership with parents, communities, and local and international organisations, READ Foundation provides access to high-quality, cost-effective and sustainable quality education programmes with an emphasis on gender parity. Quality education is supported through teacher training, improvement of the buildings and facilities, and development of locally relevant and appropriate materials. In doing this, READ Foundation is guided by the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Foundation struggles to upgrade its existing schools in most remote areas of Kashmir so that quality of education may improve and these schools provide access to many underprivileged children, uninterrupted.

# STATISTICS

Region	Enrolment			Teachers			Level				Schools	Orphans		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Male	Female	Total	Primary	Middle	High	College		Boys	Girls	Total
Bagh	7515	6028	13543	283	434	717	20	21	22	2	65	791	747	1538
Bhimber	9440	7651	17091	323	492	815	32	19	8	8	67	638	532	1170
Mirpur	2235	1666	3901	89	204	293	5	11	3	0	19	115	92	207
Gilgit	2016	828	2844	89	78	167	0	7	2	1	10	236	58	294
Murree	392	351	743	18	55	73	0	2	1	0	3	24	26	50
Poonch	1622	1455	3077	78	150	228	1	8	6	0	15	137	147	284
Kotli	9863	7243	17106	427	446	873	13	44	15	6	78	723	661	1384
Muzaffarabad	9986	7351	17337	408	528	936	38	26	14	5	83	1219	1046	2265
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43069</b>	<b>32573</b>	<b>75642</b>	<b>1715</b>	<b>2387</b>	<b>4102</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>3883</b>	<b>3309</b>	<b>7192</b>

## STRATEGY

In order to provide access to a quality education for all school-age children, especially downtrodden, destitute and orphans without discrimination against any color, creed, gender, group or class, READ Foundation follows a comprehensive strategy to open new schools and then maintaining quality of education.

READ Foundation has a Department of Education that generally takes the following steps into consideration while opening a new school in an area:

1. The field staff conducts baseline survey to select a village, where a school is to be opened.
2. Local communities are interviewed to assess their needs and are also involved in the entire process.
3. Most schools are generally opened with the help of one teacher, 25 students and a rented room. Gradual promotion of schools, from primary to secondary levels, takes place as per schools' need.
4. Initially, READ Foundation provides the basic needs of schools, such as furniture, black/white board, stationery etc.
5. All schools are established on self-sustainable basis and their running expenses are met locally through tuition fees.
6. We provide science laboratories, computer labs, and additional furniture either at the time of upgrading the school or if they cannot afford the additional expenditure.
7. The average number of students per class ranges 25-30.
8. Teachers are trained through round-the-year training workshops.
9. An elaborate system of monitoring and evaluation, to ensure the quality of education, is in place.

In order to provide and retain quality of education the organization particularly focuses on the following:

**Low Cost or Free Education:** READ Foundation does not charge any fee from orphan children and provides them allied support including uniform, books and stationery. Schools charge nominal fee from other children to meet its expenditure. To maintain quality of education, READ Foundation conducts regular teacher training workshops for which schools do not pay. Similarly, READ Foundation also helps the schools in improvement of their infrastructure through support for improvement in facilities ranging from school furniture to science and computer laboratories.

**Environment Friendly Facilities and Holistic Learning:** READ Foundation helps schools to provide an enabling environment conducive to nurturing and nourishing the natural talents, aptitudes and abilities of all students for a lifelong learning and education through innovative curriculum and teaching methodologies, standardized teachers training, professional and vocational skills advancement and a holistic human development. READ believes that learning becomes easy and fun when the environment is synchronized with it. For this purpose, READ focuses on the improvement of physical and social

environment of schools from within and outside. Internal environment is improved through the provision of better services and facilities at classroom and school level, teacher training and extra-curricular activities, whereas to improve the external environment, that may have an impact on school functions, the Principal of school keeps close liaison with the communities, government's education department and civil society organizations. In that way, READ Foundation constantly works with the communities to not only improve the learning environment at its schools but to raise awareness about the necessity of education as a key development tool.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** With the expansion in schools need for an elaborate system of M&E was felt very early and schools were divided into different clusters whereas Centers for Training and Coordination (CTC) were established. These centers act as a local facilitator and monitor of the schools and also a bridge between the Department of Education and schools. Each CTC has a manager, orphan worker and auditor.

## **SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS**

Once school is up and running, READ Foundation continuously strives to maintain their sustainability while increasing capacity and access. In that way school remains committed to achieve the following:

### **a) Orphan Sponsorship**

READ Foundation's primary focus is the provision of education for underprivileged children in a bid to empower them for a better and brighter future. READ encourages its schools to identify and enroll orphan children at schools and to meet their educational expenditure arranges sponsorships from individual donors. Currently in 340 schools 7192 orphans are getting quality education absolutely free whereas a greater number has already benefited from this scheme.

### **b) Teacher Training**

Teachers prepare children for learning and achievement in future more than anyone else. Research indicates that teacher quality, and supportive school organization and management, significantly influence school improvement and eventually pupil learning. READ Foundation never loses focus of this important pillar and organizes regular teacher training programmes to make them well versed with the contemporary teaching practices. Department of Education with the help of CTC at regional level provides opportunities for the training of all new and old teachers as per their level and needs. During the past few years many events of teacher training were held at the central level whereas internal trainers developed and improved training manuals.

### **c) School Enhancement**

As explained a new school starts with one teacher, 25 children and a rented building. School enhancement is a process through which schools improve from basic level to primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. However due to limitation of resources schools cannot afford the cost for enhancement. READ Foundation helps school get new furniture, improve water and sanitation facilities, train teachers, establish science, computer laboratories and libraries. This investment not only improves school's standard and quality of education but opens doors for new students.

#### d) School Building

The concept of a school remains incomplete without a proper building. READ Foundation puts special emphasis on construction of purpose-built schools. Our programme of building campuses helps children receive education and care they need on a continued basis in a safe and supportive environment. School campuses all around the world are a special focus of educationalists, in order to make them compliant with modern requirements of education. READ Foundation's Department of Construction is well versed with these requirements and has acquired years of experience in designing and delivering such campuses. So far, the organization has been able to provide purpose-built conventional and pre-engineered campuses for more than 40,000 children in 150 schools.

#### FINANCIALS

Every READ Foundation school is self sustainable. READ's Department of Education interacts with a school through its regional CTC. Schools provide annual budget forecast and financial feedback on a prescribed format for the review and record of the department. Below are the costs associated with different components:

- Primary School Building	\$150,000
- High School Building	\$250,000
- Orphan Sponsorship	\$600/annum
- Teacher Training	\$1,000 / 30 teachers
- Water Supply	\$800
- Toilets/Sanitation	\$1,500