



Asia-South Pacific

Ed Watch

Asia-South Pacific Education Watch

Pakistan: Summary Report

Education Financing and People's Aspirations in Pakistan



About Asia-South Pacific Education Watch Initiative

The critical state and ailing condition of education in many countries in Asia-South Pacific region compels serious and urgent attention from all education stakeholders.

Centuries of neglect, underinvestment in education, corruption, and inefficiency by successive governments in the countries of the region have left a grim toll in poor education performance marked by low school attendance and survival rates, high dropout and illiteracy rates, and substandard education quality.

Moreover, there are glaring disparities in access to education and learning opportunities: hundreds of millions of impoverished and disadvantaged groups which include out-of-school children and youth, child workers, children in conflict areas, women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, dalit caste and other socially discriminated sectors, remain largely unreached and excluded by the education system.

Hence they are denied their fundamental human right to education and hindered from availing of the empowering and transformative tool of quality, life-long learning that could have equipped them to realize their full human potential, uplift their living conditions, and participate meaningfully in governance and in decisions that affect their lives.

At Midway: Failing Grade in EFA

In the year 2000, governments and the international community affirmed their commitment to quality Education for All (EFA) and Millenium Develoment Goals (MDGs). Midway to target year 2015, government assessments of EFA progress reveal that education gaps and disparities persist, and education conditions may even be worsening as indicated by shortfalls and reversals in EFA achievement.

The landmark year 2007 therefore presents a timely opportunity for civil society networks to engage governments in addressing the unmet EFA goals and MDG education targets, especially for disadvantaged groups.

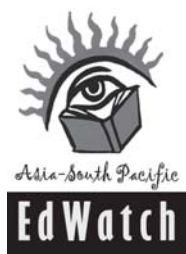
Real World Strategies

Spurred by the challenge of pushing for accelerated progress towards EFA, the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) launched the Real World Strategies (RWS) programme to undertake realistic and practical initiatives based on the actual conditions, experiences, and aspirations of people in communities.

(Continued on inside back cover)

Pakistan: Summary Report

Education Financing and People's Aspirations in Pakistan



2008

ISBN 81-278-0031-7

Pakistan: Summary Report

Education Financing and People's Aspirations in Pakistan

© 2008, Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE)

The **Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE)** is a regional association of organisations and individuals working towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, life-long adult education and learning. It strives to forge and sustain an Asia-Pacific movement dedicated to mobilizing and supporting community and people's organizations, national education coalitions, teachers unions, campaign networks, and other civil society groups and institutions in holding governments and the international donor community accountable in meeting education targets and commitments, ensuring the right of all to education, and upholding education as an empowering tool for combating poverty and all forms of exclusion and discrimination, pursuing sustainable development, enabling active and meaningful participation in governance, and building a culture of peace and international understanding.

ASPBAE publications form an integral part of ASPBAE's information, education, and advocacy activities and efforts, and seek to support sharing and learning among education stakeholders, advocates, practitioners, analysts, and policy-makers. The reader is therefore encouraged to use the material contained herein for reproduction, adaptation, and translation worldwide for use in nonprofit education and information activities and publications, with due acknowledgement to ASPBAE, and to provide feedback that could help in further improving these publications.

Contents

1	Education Financing and People's Aspirations in Pakistan
4	Chapter 1: Research Framework
	Methodology
	Qualitative Research
5	Chapter 2: Education Financing in Pakistan
	Decentralization
	Local Government Ordinance 2001
	Impact on the Education Sector
8	Chapter 3: Education in Pakistan in 2005-2006
	Overview of the Education Sector
	Private Sector Education Expenditures
	Budget Data from the Districts
	Tied Grants
13	Chapter 4: For Districts — New Opportunities and Lingering Problems
	Perceptions of District Education Managers
	Aspirations of the People
17	Chapter 5: Challenges Faced and Learnings
	Who is responsible for the poor state of education?
18	Chapter 6: Summing up
	Recommended Priorities in Financing Good Governance and Management Issues
27	Acronyms Used
	Footnotes
	References used in this Pakistan Summary Report



Executive Editorial Board:

Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan
Secretary General, ASPBAE

Bernard Lovegrove
Programme Manager, ASPBAE

Raquel Castillo
*Asia Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator,
Real World Strategies for Education for All, ASPBAE*

Rene Raya, *Lead Policy Analyst, ASPBAE*

Pakistan Research Team:

Main writer for the report: Nasreen Azhar

Lead in the research team: Malick Shahbaz Ahmed

Coordinator of the whole EdWatch research in Pakistan: Zehra Arshad

Advisers:

Harris Khaliq

Baela Raza Jamee

Kamleshwer Lohana

Rabia Khan

Ibrash Pasha

Ali Naqvi

Nighat Rifaq

Publications Group:

Sylvia de Guzman, *Writer for regional synthesis report*

Rebecca Lozada, *Editor*

Michael Garcia, *Layout Artist & Printing Press Liaison*

Federico 'Boy' Dominguez, *Cover Designer/Illustrator*

All EdWatch reports are independent reports and do not necessarily reflect the views of all the members of the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

Pakistan: Summary Report

Education Financing and People's Aspirations in Pakistan

This study was conducted across the country in a total of 23 districts, 5 districts each in the four provinces of Pakistan, i.e. Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh, North Western Frontier Province (NWFP), and 2 districts in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK).

The main purpose of the paper was to unravel the intricate budgeting process in the education sector, with special focus on education financing after devolution. It is anticipated that the research will help us understand why, despite the increased spending, we are nowhere near achieving the objectives committed to in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Dakar Education for All (EFA) goals.

For many decades, education, with its seemingly insurmountable challenges, has captured the public spotlight. Ideally, education serves a critical role in society by cultivating future generations who are able to express their individuality and creativity to their fullest potential, thus serving to improve society as a whole. Though education is vital to the well-being of the country, Government has not given it the attention it merits. It has been starved of resources and remains out of reach because of systemic weaknesses in the administration of education. Great effort, including the provision of major investment in funding and resources for public schools, is required before the goal of quality education for all can be achieved.

The quality of education and access to quality education in public schools, where the vast majority of children study, are major areas of concern. Parents are generally unhappy with the education that their children are getting in public schools, and there is general consensus that the fundamental need is to provide an enabling learning environment, where children can have equal opportunity, as in the best private schools. The research shows that lack of proper school buildings, books, furniture and basic facilities, uneven fee structures, and inadequate teaching materials pose serious challenges to improving the quality of education in public schools. In all of the above, the allocation and utilisation of financial resources play a major role.



Poor teaching methodologies, low enrolment and low retention rates in public schools were reported and observed at primary school level in all four provinces. In NWFP, rural Sindh and Balochistan, the insufficient number of primary schools was an additional handicap.

It was found that there was no mechanism in district governments for accurately prioritising needs for financial resources, or for influencing prioritisation mechanisms at provincial and federal level. Despite renewed national and international commitments, most government officials across the country seemed unaware of the relatively greater importance that Federal Government was giving to education. This reflects negatively on policy-making, as most district and provincial governments have not prioritised education in their budgets as far as the allocation of finances is concerned.

The system for financing education at district level remains inappropriate and ambiguous. Local budgets fail to take district priorities into account. Often, budgets have no bearing on things such as available resources, logistics, organizational arrangements, and incentives required to ensure prompt implementation, monitoring and quality of educational programs. It was observed that the district government is unable to identify its role in taking initiatives in the education sector. This reflects the severe lack of capacity at district level. Yet, there was absence of political will on the part of district governments to enhance the capacity of department functionaries. In instances, unnecessary procedural hurdles were created in the process of allocations.

It was found that the widespread misuse of political influence and interference played a major negative role impacting the education system. Politicians handed out teaching jobs as patronage appointments, and local landlords and political figures intervened routinely in the administration of education at the local level.

The shortage of both male and female teachers has hampered education in all provinces, especially in Balochistan, Sindh and NWFP. It was found that teaching was not considered to be a particularly privileged profession, and most teachers had ended up where they were by default and not by choice. It is probable that this factor accounts for much of the teacher absenteeism seen in public schools. Teacher absenteeism was equally witnessed in girls' and boys' schools; however, the phenomenon was markedly more dominant in rural schools.

Increasing differences in education standards in public and private schools was observed, which, not surprisingly, serves to decrease the trust of communities on state-run schools.

The lack of coordination between parents and school officials indicates the low involvement of stakeholders in influencing education policies. Also, not all teachers, especially not those at school level, are familiar with policies in the education sector. This serves to exclude them from benefiting from changes in state policies or policymaking. For instance, not too many teachers are aware of the Education Sector Reforms (ESR) initiative, or Government's attempts to prioritise education in its national policies. This is mainly due to poor interaction of policy makers with teachers. But it is also because government policies are printed in English and not in the local language, and are therefore not easily accessible to many teachers.

In short, there exist currently in Pakistan many obstacles on the road to a smoothly functioning, efficient education system. These include: political interference, corruption, over-centralization, and lack of school autonomy, underdeveloped managerial capacity, and poor information systems. In addition, lack of proper school buildings, furniture and basic facilities, inadequate teaching methods, low enrolment and low retention rates, are all reflective of the poor supply and low quality of education offered by the public sector in Pakistan. Linked to all these is the urgent need to put in place an effective and workable system that can deliver equitable and timely resources towards improving the quality of education for all children, including the most disadvantaged.



Chapter I: Research Framework

Methodology

A combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods was used to collect primary data. In addition, secondary data was collected from research reports, articles in journals, government documents and other archives.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative data was gathered to 1) accurately profile financial allocations for education, expenditures and current policy paradigms, with special reference to gender and rural differences and disadvantaged children; 2) to estimate the extent of education deprivation and its links with economic deprivation; and 3) to gauge people's aspirations regarding education in general.

Tool: Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was used to 1) collect data, in order to match it with people's aspirations and existing policy paradigms; 2) gauge the extent to which education has been prioritised in making financial allocations; and 3) reflect upon the impact of the education budget on the current system.

Target Groups

Target groups included decision makers in Finance Division, Education Ministry and departments at federal and provincial levels, as well as Finance & Planning sections at the district level.

Qualitative Research

Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) were conducted to understand whether spending priorities in education coincided with aspirations of citizens, especially the disadvantaged.

Target Group

The study targeted three groups: 1) teachers/school management; 2) Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs); and 3) children at the district level.

Sample Size

All four provinces and Azad Kashmir were covered by the study, a total of 23 districts (five in each of the four provinces, and two in Azad Kashmir). Marginalized districts where the Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) has a strong presence were selected. Forty

(40) key informant interviews were conducted; and 182 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted.

A large amount of secondary data was collected and analyzed.

Chapter 2: Education Financing in Pakistan

In recent years, education financing in Pakistan has come under the intense scrutiny of academics, foreign donors and non-government organizations for two reasons. First, devolution of power and service delivery responsibilities introduced in the year 2001 brought significant changes in the education sector.¹ These changes have important implications for the education sector, especially since they claim to empower local governments through an increased role in the budgeting process, thereby encouraging projects to be selected on the basis of local needs and public aspirations.

Second, in spite of the increased expenditure by Government and foreign donors, and Government's avowed commitment to achieving education targets by 2015, the performance by the education sector has been persistently disappointing. The current literacy rate of 56%, considered by some to be even an inflated official figure (Siddiqui, 2007), reflects poorly on the impact of administrative and financial devolution.

Decentralization

A common problem with decentralization has been the reluctance of central governments to surrender actual power. Experience around the world shows that responsibilities are off-loaded onto local tiers without providing the requisite financial and administrative support (Fiske, 1996). Such problems are all too relevant in the case of Pakistan.





Local Government Ordinance 2001

The Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2001² devolution plan abolished the previous three levels of provincial administration (divisions, districts and *tehsils*³), creating instead a new tier of local government, comprising of districts, *tehsils* and union councils. Political, administrative and fiscal responsibilities were devolved from the Provincial Governments to the district administration.

Impact on the Education Sector

Previously, Provincial Governments received most of the revenue from the nationally shared pool of resources. This was spent according to provincially set priorities. Now, Provincial Governments are required to transfer revenues to district level governments, within two weeks, in the form of formula-driven block grants not earmarked for specific uses, and district officials are expected to determine the education budget and expenditure.

Federal Government: While primary and secondary education service delivery responsibilities are in the hands of Provincial and Local Governments, policymaking has been retained by the Federal Government. The Federal Ministry of Education directly oversees educational facilities and, while Provincial Governments administer universities, the Federal Government provides their funding. Under devolution, the Federal Government is responsible for setting teachers' pay levels, defining required credentials, setting the national curriculum and evaluating student performance. It provides earmarked funds for disadvantaged areas, thereby playing an important role in promoting equity in the provision of social services.

Provincial Government: The Provincial Governments remain responsible for teacher training. Though their role in the budget making process has been considerably reduced, they continue to play a significant role in increasing access to education and reducing inequity in service provision.

District Government: The District *Nazim* heads the District Government, and is responsible for proposing the education budget to the District Council. The Executive District Officer-Education (EDO-E) heads the district education department. Under the EDO are the District Education Officers (DEOs) and the Assistant District Education Officers (ADEOs). At the union council level, Learning Coordinators (LCs) provide academic guidance and supervise the schools, while Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs) /School Management Committees (SMCs) / School Councils (SCs) provide for greater community participation.⁴

An important change is that District Governments will now decide the location of new schools and how they will be financed, and directly evaluate teachers' performance. So while the revenues come primarily from the Federal Government via the Provincial Government, it is the prerogative of the District Government to decide how much of that money will be spent on education and on other public services.

For the majority of districts, the provincial finance departments developed de-facto budgets in the first year of devolution. However, the District Governments were given the right to modify these budgets according to their own needs and priorities by re-appropriating funds from one head to another (or even from one sector to the other). All the staff (other than those who had been with the local government prior to devolution) remained as provincial employees. The non-salary budget, recurrent and development expenditure, was transferred to the District Governments. In the year 2001/02, education remained the major function of districts.

For year 2002/03, each district was provided a single line transfer in the provincial budget. Most of the districts adopted the given budget as their own, with minor changes in some cases. Overall,



the degree of autonomy of districts in preparing their 2002/03 budgets was not high, although city districts showed more independence, reflecting their greater capacity.

The Federal Government releases funds through the Ministry of Finance, which allows funds re-appropriation from one head to another only in exceptional cases. The Finance Division, if required, also sanctions supplementary grants for some immediate expenses. Budget cuts can be imposed for unsatisfactory performance or under-utilised expenditures. The Education Sector often faces the imposition of cuts in budget.

Notwithstanding the LGO and directives of the Federal Government, the Provincial Governments have designed their own procedures for release of funds to District Governments. With few exceptions, the overall policies guiding cash flow from the provinces have become major factors in obstructing the smooth flow of funds to the districts. While funds for recurrent budgets are transferred on monthly basis, release of development funds is rather arbitrary. The elaborate budget execution procedures create difficulties for District Governments in utilizing allocations.



Chapter 3: Education in Pakistan in 2005-2006

Overview of the Education Sector

The education sector has been suffering because of the repeated changes in policies and their implementation. It presented a bleak picture in year 2005-2006, though there were some encouraging signs too. The year was the fourth year of devolution and the study found that the implementation mechanism had started shaping up and resources had also begun flowing to the lowest tier. Enrolments have increased, but teacher-student ratio has not witnessed much change.

The major bulk of enrolment is at the pre-primary, primary and middle levels, while the share of enrolment at university, college and professional levels is just 1 percent each. The enrolment at high school and higher secondary school level is only 6 and 3 percent respectively. This shows enrolment as an inverse pyramid where more children are getting enrolled at the lowest level, but the system has no strength to carry them forward to secondary and higher levels. It also reflects poor retention rates at the lower level, but no exact data could be accessed.

Considerable gender gaps prevails at all levels of education, except at the degree college level, where girls slightly outnumber boys, and the number of female teachers is also comparatively higher (though not the case in professional colleges). In higher secondary schools, boys and girls are almost equal.

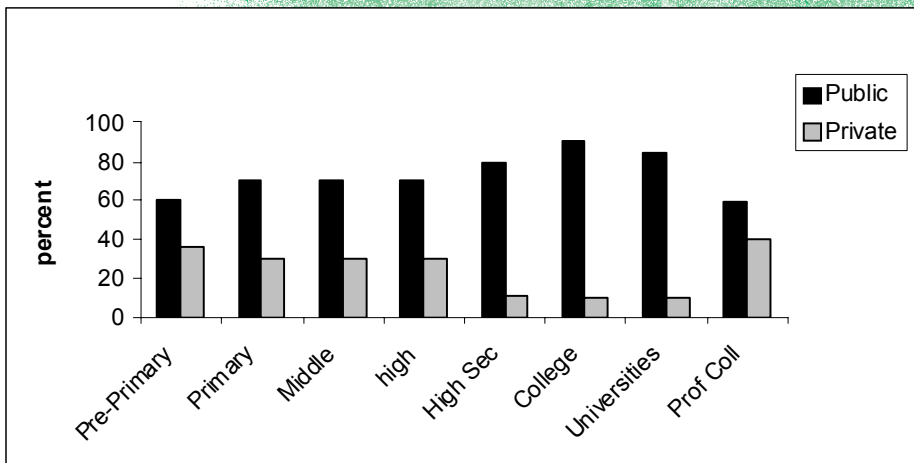


Figure 1: Enrolment by Public and Private Institutions

In spite of the mantra of Public-Private Partnership (PPP), and generous incentives given to the private sector, it is the public schools that cater to the maximum number of children, especially in remote and underdeveloped areas that are not commercially profitable. In 2005-2006 an average of 65% of primary school children, both boys and girls, attended public schools, with a higher percentage in rural areas (76%) than in urban areas (43%).

At all levels the greater number of students are to be found in the public institutions. A number of the poorest of the poor children are compelled to go to the *madrasahs*, or religious schools because these also offer food and shelter.

Pre-Primary Education

Out of 8.5 million children between the ages of 3-5 years in 2005-2006, the cumulative public sector pre-primary enrolment was 4.34 million children during the period under review. In comparison to the public sector, the gender imbalance was smaller in private sector institutions at this level.



Primary Education

According to 2005-2006 statistics, overall gross enrolment has shot up to 87%. This includes the very high proportion of over-aged children (above nine years) who are still at primary level for a multiple of reasons. Though gross enrolment has increased, the rise in net enrolment was negligible, and province-wise gender imbalance persisted at all levels. Balochistan had the lowest overall enrolment of 65% with only 50% girls' participation.

A large number of primary school-age children, almost 47 %, are still out of school. This means that of the 19 million school-age children, approximately 7 million children are out of school. Poverty, shortage of schools and of teaching staff are the most common problems, especially in rural areas. Also, many children of the poor are engaged in child labour and cannot afford to go to school. Girls are required to help out at home, or are not sent to school because education for girls may not be considered a priority. Nevertheless, the gross and net enrolment ratios for girls in rural areas have also witnessed some increase during the last couple of years. Enrolments are considerably higher in urban areas.

The dropout rate at primary level is a major cause for concern. Almost twice the number of children drop out of school in rural areas (27%) as compared to children in the urban areas (15.4%). As many as 46% boys and 28% girls in rural areas, and 39% boys and 35% girls in urban areas drop out as they are 'unwilling to continue their education'. There can be a number of reasons for this. The curriculum may be seen as being irrelevant; or teaching methods may be uninteresting. Boys have blamed corporal punishment as a reason for leaving school.



Public Sector Education Expenditures

Pakistan's spending on public sector education has not increased in proportion to its overall growth rate, as is evident from the budgetary allocation of 2.4% of the GDP, despite an exponential growth of almost 7% in the education sector during the last couple of years. Disaggregated data for 2004-2005 shows that 18% of the total funds for public sector education were spent on development programs; while 82% went to non-developmental expenses. Slightly over 10% was spent on adult literacy, non-formal education, teachers' training, and *madrasah* reforms. The average expenditure per student was estimated to be PKR 4821 (about USD 60) per annum.

Figures for 2005-2006 are only slightly better and show that of the total allocation of PKR 163 billion (USD 2 billion); about 75% was spent on current programs, while 24% was earmarked for development activities. Some PKR 45,088.8 million were earmarked for Federal Government educational programs, with PKR 25,584.6 million for current programs and PKR 1950.42 million for development. The Higher Education Commission was given PKR 41 million for current programs and PKR 60 million for development activities.

Between 2001 and 2008 a total of USD 1527 million were contributed for education as credit from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank, and grants from international donors, primarily, the USA, the European Union, CIDA, WFP, NORAD, JICA and GTZ. (Source: Ministry of Education)

Private Sector Education Expenditures

The private sector incurred an expenditure of PKR 33,114 million on 10,431,799 students enrolled at all levels, from pre-primary to university and professional level colleges and institutions. Overall, average expenditure per student per annum has been PKR 3174 (USD 40) per student at all levels, as compared to the more generous PKR 4281 per student annual expenditure by the public sector institutions. (National Education Census 2006-2007).





Budget Data from the Districts

Partial primary data containing details of actual allocation and utilisation of funds was obtained from the 23 districts studied, after persistent attempts and considerable difficulty. Data on utilised/unutilised funds, development and non-development expenditures was incomplete, and there was no disaggregated data regarding gender or rural/urban differences. In at least two cases, figures for amounts allocated were not available.

The available data from Sindh shows that large sums allocated for non-development expenses remained unutilised in teachers' salary budgets. This could be because in Sindh a ban on new recruitment of teachers has been in place for almost eight years. The ban has resulted in severe problems of under-staffing in public schools in Sindh.

Data from Punjab, though incomplete, shows that greater amounts were allocated for education in each successive year, and education was considered the first priority. Budget data from NWFP and Balochistan are even more incomplete. While NWFP invested in health as the priority sector, Balochistan invested more in education.

Tied Grants

Tied grants are provided by Provincial and Federal Governments, or directly by donors, such as United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), with clearly defined objectives. District Governments cannot utilize these funds for any other purpose except as specified. These grants provide additional resources over and above the districts' own budgets. Examples of government-supported programs funded by Tied Grants are *Tawana* Pakistan, which provided nutrition to girls in public schools, and the Punjab Educational Sector Reform Program (PESRP).

Chapter 4: For Districts — New Opportunities and Lingering Problems

Introduction of single line budgets have given District Governments the opportunity to make decisions according to perceived needs: financing individual schools, choosing schools needing infrastructure, maintenance, reconstruction, and staff.

The procedure for obtaining finances is fairly simple. The concerned EDO prepares the annual budget and submits it to the District Government, which sends it to the Budget Development Council (BDC). All the EDOs of the district responsible for the different sectors, as well as Union Council representatives, are members of this council, while the District *Nazim* is the chairperson. The BDC reviews and amends the proposals and sends them to the District (*Zila*) Scrutiny Committee that gives the final approval and releases the funds to the EDOs for implementation. While the *Nazim* has the authority for decisions concerning development needs, the EDO is mainly responsible for non-development expenditure. To what extent public aspirations are reflected in the decisions taken, depends very much on the *Nazim* and the EDO-Education.

One difficulty faced by the districts was that the Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) awards were finalized late in the budget preparation cycle. The high rigidity of the salary budgets, which by far are the major component of district budgets, was also a constraint. Districts cannot increase or decrease the number of positions in any office, nor fill vacant positions without provincial concurrence. In large measure, therefore, budget making becomes an exercise that gives incremental increases in salaries, with autonomy remaining in areas where unconditional funds are received from the General Sales Tax (GST) share or the district's own source revenues.

Unfortunately, there were several instances where decisions taken were said to be politically motivated and large funds were diverted to areas dominated by the ruling party in the District Government. This trend was dominant in most of the districts. More than two thirds, or 69%, of the EDOs interviewed complained that political pressure commonly played a part in the hiring and transfer of teachers, and in prioritising areas for funding. It was reported that, if s/he so desires, the EDO (Finance & Planning), appointed by the Provincial Government, manipulates the allocation process and denies funds to areas and sectors not favored by the Provincial Government, thereby obstructing the planning and allocation process envisioned by the district management.

Perceptions of District Education Managers

District officials interviewed by the research team had the following perceptions:

District influence on policy/obtaining of funds

Some 66%, as against 33%, said that decisions regarding policies and allocation of funds were taken by the Provincial Finance Commissions with little or no input from the districts.

Quality Education

There were varying perceptions regarding quality education. The largest number pointed to good teachers, followed by schools with basic facilities, reading, writing and maths skills. An overwhelming majority (9.4%) said 'quality education should lead to the mental, physical and spiritual development of the child.'

Disadvantaged Groups

The largest numbers of district officials identified poor children as the disadvantaged, followed by girls. A few mentioned minorities. One respondent thought that teachers were the most disadvantaged, which is not entirely untrue, given their low status in society and poor monetary compensation.

Rural schools

The common view of rural schools was that they were inaccessible, had difficulty in finding teachers, lacked basic facilities, and catered to fewer children (which meant bigger costs per child). But, it was thought that more attention was being paid to rural schools than before.

Teachers' Role, Responsibilities, Performance and Characteristics

Teachers in public schools were seen as being over-worked and grossly underpaid.

District Priorities for Education Funds

Funds were allocated to areas with higher population density; to girls' education; and to rural and deprived areas.

District Priorities for Development Sector

Only a few respondents clearly identified education as a priority. Others mentioned roads and sanitation, drinking water and dams.

Aspirations of the People

Participants in the FGDs held in the districts held the following views:

Quality Education

Most were of the opinion that quality education was synonymous with good teachers. Next came basic facilities at school, a friendly environment, adequate resources, and a syllabus that met the learning needs of students.

Teachers' Role, Responsibilities, Characteristics and Performance

Teachers were worthy of respect and their services to the community were appreciated. Children preferred teachers who were kind, rather than strict. Adults thought teachers were the backbone of the education system; they should be well trained. It was also reported that some teachers in the rural areas were getting paid but were not going to work. There was a view that teachers had become avaricious, were of poor standard and were irresponsible.

Schoolteachers, on the other hand, complained that they were widely used for tasks other than teaching: in government surveys, campaigns against polio, and preparation of voters' lists, which interfered with their professional duties. They believed they were grossly underpaid.

Facilities at School

Public schools, particularly in the rural areas, did not have essential facilities, such as drinking water, washrooms, electricity and boundary walls. Only three groups in urban localities were satisfied with facilities at school. More than half the number of groups said that facilities in girls' schools and in rural schools were poor or altogether absent.

Barriers to Girls' Education

Respondents thought that there is a lack of adequate appreciation of the importance of girls' education on the part of parents and the

community, especially in rural areas and the more conservative provinces of NWFP and Balochistan. Traditional practices and patriarchal attitudes serve to undermine the status of girls and women. Respondents from Sindh accused powerful feudal landowners of enforcing and perpetuating such attitudes. On the other hand, in Central Punjab, because of the generally high literacy rate, there were less cultural barriers to girls' education. The literacy rate among girls is significantly higher in Punjab compared to the other provinces.

The largest number of respondents blamed social attitudes, particularly among males: that girls should be married at a young age; that their mobility should be restricted; that their primary duty was to help in household chores; that if girls were educated they would become too independent. Teachers lamented the observation that parents saw no economic benefit in educating daughters, who would soon get married anyway and move to someone else's house.

More practical barriers were also identified: there were fewer schools for girls, particularly at middle and high school level; schools were too far from homes and there were no transport facilities; parents were concerned about security; or were busy in the fields and needed the girls to look after the house. Only five respondents cited poverty as a reason for not sending girls to school.

Teachers Associations and School Management Committees

According to respondents in Punjab, Parents-Teachers School Management Committees were ineffective in pushing for improvements in schools, human resources, effective monitoring and management. Influential persons dominated most committees, which hinders the participation of genuine stakeholders. In cases where Parents Teachers School Management Committees (PTSMCs) were functioning, it was reported that teachers had nominated the members undemocratically. In many schools PTSMCs were missing, and teachers did not express any intention or interest in constituting them. Some teachers felt that such forums interfered with their work. SMCs in Sindh were reported to be functioning more effectively.





Who is responsible for the poor state of education?

The largest number felt that Government, elected representatives, teachers, PTAs and SMCs, parents and the whole community were at fault.

The Headmistress from a Girls' Primary School in rural Sindh summed it up when she said: "In my view all the above are responsible for the poor condition of our education system. Elected representatives only come when they need something from us. If we invite them, they have no time to attend our programs. Teachers don't come to school on time and are not bothered about teaching well. Parents of our area are not ready to send their children to school. They say, "What will they get from going to school?" About girls, they say, "They are going to be looking after their homes — what do they need education for?"

Chapter 5: Challenges Faced and Learnings

Though PCE member organizations which participated in the study have a credible presence in all 23 districts where the research was conducted, and have worked with local communities over a number of years, the research proved to be a challenging exercise. This was perhaps the first time that a study on financial allocations and utilisation in the education sector was conducted at the local level on such a large scale. Hence, government officials were unused to being asked questions related to financial matters and were unused to looking at finances from the eyes of the community.

For researchers too it was a new experience. Though used to working on social issues, they were not familiar with finances and budgets. However, their familiarity with the area and contacts with local people were helpful in getting through to local government officials and also in obtaining information regarding people's aspirations.

Generally speaking, the studies broke new ground for both researchers and respondents, and, even though problems were encountered at every stage of the research, new experiences and skills were gained.

Chapter 6: Summing up

Tracking education financing is a tricky and complex undertaking in the context of Pakistan where access to information is often denied and problems of correlation of data prevail. Nevertheless, the available data does show that government is allocating more resources to education, and decentralization of powers seems to have improved efficiency in providing basic education services to the community. But federal policies are yet to be effectively translated into action.

** Need for Greater Participation by Stakeholders*

Councilors, who are supposed to be a bridge between communities and the local government, generally hail from the local upper middle class. Once elected they never consult their constituents. Presently there is not only a shortage of funds but, also, available funds are not prioritised to meet educational targets. District Governments are not getting funds according to their demands, and District Management Committees are not playing an active role in decision making regarding financial allocations. It was also found that District Governments have no inkling at all that prioritising of financing for education is a requisite part of the government's international commitment to improve the state of education in the country. This indicates that there is a lack of sharing between the Federal and Provincial Governments on the one hand, and District Governments on the other. On their part, District Governments adopt no mechanisms to prioritise educational spending according to local needs. Nor, what is equally important, are policies at federal level influenced by local concerns.

To inform the policy development process and ensure smooth implementation of policy initiatives, a bottom-up approach needs to be adopted, where all tiers of the government can participate in policy development and, consequently, accept ownership of the policies. Participatory decision making must be institutionalised at all levels to ensure that all those at the implementing level are on board.

** Need for Capacity Building at Local Level*

A key finding was that none of the selected districts, where the research was conducted, had ever demanded extra money. In fact, they had on many occasions surrendered back unutilised money allocated under different heads. This inability to utilise funds efficiently is not only a governance issue; it also reflects lack of capacity at the local level.

It is suggested that training of education department officials and managers should be instituted to strengthen local governments and enhance their capacity to function efficiently. This would be possible only through the progressive participation of education managers and administrators in developing policies, and ensuring that policy implementers at the district level are trained in effective planning and financial management of basic public education.

Also, there must be rational planning and strict accountability for non-utilisation of funds. Provincial Governments should be accountable to the Federal Government and District Governments to Provincial Governments regarding planned goals and targets. Accountability should also apply to district education departments and individual schools by making them accountable against their annual plans and targets in terms of increase in enrolment, and improvement in quality of education.

** Setting Priorities at the District Level*

It is recommended that the government should set clear objectives and achievable goals for utilisation of the increased financial resources, and District Governments should be held accountable if funds are not utilised. Moreover, to meet the growing needs for basic education in public schools, governments must dedicate more finances, to support education plans with clearly defined goals and objectives, especially in Balochistan and the rural areas of the country.

Recommended Priorities in Financing

Quality Education that is Responsive to People's Aspirations

Different stakeholders provided their different opinions regarding quality education. However, these perceptions were not greatly dissimilar.

The majority of district level education managers identified priority areas for achieving quality as being: reconstruction of schools, provision of basic facilities to schools, capacity building of teachers, and strengthening of Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs). They also pointed to the need for equal financial support for boys' and girls' schools in both urban and rural areas.

Basic facilities of school were of primary concern to the majority of primary stakeholders, the children and parents. They complained of the shortage of essentials, such as desks, chairs, teaching materials and

classrooms, the non-availability of drinking water and the absence of washroom facilities, as well as boundary walls and space for playgrounds. In Mansehra (NWFP), it was noted that though efforts were underway to reconstruct schools destroyed in the massive 2005 earthquake, the process was painfully slow and the majority of children were still studying in tents or temporary shelters. The same situation prevailed in Azad Kashmir.

Respondents, mainly in rural areas, believed that poverty was the root cause of the indifferent state of education in the country, and it must be addressed urgently. They asked for a needs-based education system that also help in alleviating poverty. They believed that all stakeholders, including elected representatives, government officials, teachers, parents and other community members, were responsible for the overall unsatisfactory situation, and felt that everyone should work together to improve conditions. They particularly highlighted the central role of teachers and emphasized the importance of good, qualified teachers for quality education.

Issues identified in the research that require improvement through sustained financial inputs are addressed below.

1. Teachers: better teacher/child ratio; effective teachers' training
Student/teacher ratio is said to be 38 children per teacher at the primary level, but the situation in rural and urban areas is very different. Generally speaking, there are not enough teachers in rural schools, and particularly in girls' schools in rural areas.
 - a) More teachers should be employed
 - b) Teachers' salaries must be raised in order to attract better qualified people to the profession
 - c) Pedagogy must be offered in colleges and universities as a specialized subject on par with Medicine and Engineering.
2. The 'Access to Education' issue
Though greater efforts have made been in the past seven years to provide education to children, educational facilities in the public sector have failed to keep pace with the growing population. Though enrolment at primary level has improved in the period under review the dropout rate remains high. The high dropout rates are also linked to economic factors. Children attending school in rural areas are often indispensable for sustaining family businesses such as farming or helping out at home. They may

drop out of school in times of economic hardships, or because the education being offered is seen to be of poor quality or irrelevant.

- a) There is an urgent need to invest in building middle and high schools for girls, and public schools in rural areas, particularly in far-flung areas of Balochistan. In Sindh, government schools that have been taken over by influential people must be retrieved and made functional
 - b) Greater efforts will need to be made to motivate parents to send their children to school, through media campaigns and other means; and concerted efforts will need to be made to reduce the number of dropouts.
3. Adequate physical infrastructure and basic facilities in school
Investment in 'missing facilities' has been a priority area for government allocations, and a large number of schools have benefited from the program. However, major funding is still needed for providing basic facilities, such as drinking water, washrooms, electricity, boundary walls and space in schools all over the country, particularly in rural areas.
 4. Conducive learning environment and 'child friendly' approach
Schools in the public sector must be provided with teaching materials, which arouse interest and promote creativity; playgrounds must be provided and sports promoted to introduce children to teamwork and 'rules of the game,' and give them the opportunity to develop their talent for sports; extra curricular activities must be institutionalised. There must be a total ban on corporal punishment.
 5. Addressing needs of disadvantaged children
The failure of the state to provide education, food and shelter to its poorest citizens has encouraged the poor to enroll their children in the numerous religious *madrasahs* that have sprouted all over the country since the time of the Afghan war against the Soviet occupation. The *madrasahs* offer food, shelter and clothing, but the education they provide sometimes constricts children's minds and promotes an intolerant mindset based on a narrow interpretation of religion. Apart from urgently upgrading the public education system, special measures will have to be taken

to address the issue of *madrasahs*.

- a) The government must invest in schools for the poorest children that provide board and lodging with quality education.
- b) Monthly stipends should be given to all disadvantaged school children, the poor, and the handicapped. (This may also serve to discourage child labour.)

6. Addressing girls' education

Public schools in rural settings, especially girls' schools, are the most disadvantaged within the public education system. The research looked at efforts made by the government to reduce gender disparities by improving the condition of girls' schools and providing more funds to rural schools. Such initiatives have been limited geographically and in their scope. For instance, the government of Punjab, under the Punjab Education Sector Reforms Program initiative, has launched a program in eight districts where they give stipends to girls, provide better infrastructure in rural schools, provide teaching materials and appoint teachers where needed. Sindh too offers stipends to girls, and other provinces provide food and nutritional support as incentives. Such programs were fairly successful in reducing gender disparities and minimizing the urban-rural gap. But apart from these limited initiatives, the study did not find any comprehensive programming to improve the situation in these two areas.

- a) Special measures and affirmative action must be continued and extended to the whole country.
- b) Female teachers need to be appointed, especially in rural areas.
- c) Long leaves taken by female teachers, especially for pregnancy, result in interruptions, hence backup teachers must be available.
- d) More girls' schools at all levels, but particularly middle and high schools, need to be set up.
- e) The government should adopt a holistic approach to address the widening gender disparities and rural-urban divide in the public school system, and define clearly measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators, so that plans can be implemented and targets can be met.

7. Addressing needs of rural areas

Since decentralization was adopted in 2001 rural schools have received more attention. However, much still needs to be done in this area, and, as respondents pointed out, it is the rural schools that are the most in need of basic facilities and competent teachers. The study also questions the wisdom of giving priority to densely populated areas when allocating funds. The intention no doubt is to benefit the largest number but populated areas are more likely to also be served by private schools, whereas sparse and dispersed populations, especially if they are located in far-off areas, can only be served by the State. Distance learning for schools is still a distant option. In the immediate future it is the State that must provide education to such children.

Good Governance and Management Issues

Some issues identified by stakeholders were not necessarily linked to financing and had more to do with good governance and better management. These are addressed below.

1. Political interference

The education sector is highly politicized. Because of its wide network of institutions, political actors and people with vested interests have made it a habit to interfere and exert their influence. From school to district, and from district to federal level, appointments and postings of employees are politicized. Politicians hand out teaching jobs as patronage appointments, and interfere with postings and transfers. Political interference is especially common in rural schools. This affects primary schools very negatively, which in any case are facing a shortage of teachers and are potentially one-teacher schools. In the case of transfers, usually because of political pressure, primary schools have been shut down for long periods till the appointment of a new teacher, causing interruptions in children's education. Federal and provincial funds provided for education sometimes remain unused, especially in rural areas, because feudal landowners are opposed to educating "their" people.

- a) If the government is serious about education, political interference must be stopped.
- b) Frequent transfers of teachers should not be allowed, or at

least, before any transfers or long leaves, alternative arrangements must be put in place.

- c) Education managers should focus on appointing teachers from the same communities, rather than bringing in teachers from other areas. This would help ease the transportation problem for teachers and also facilitate teacher-parent relationships.

Essentially, schools must be given greater autonomy. Currently, school principals have limited decision-making powers. By giving schools more independence, principals would have the authority to appoint personnel and determine crucial day-to-day issues. Principals, not upper-level bureaucrats, are in the better position to make decisions that concern the daily realities of school life.

2. Continuity of good practices and policies

Unfortunately, Pakistan has experienced countless education reform programs and policies aimed at increasing the overall literacy rate, in which millions of rupees were invested. Yet countless children and adults remain entrenched in the quagmire of illiteracy. Governments have the bad habit of scrapping and belittling initiatives taken by their predecessors and launching their own new policies.

The study stresses the importance of continuing good practices and policies, and building on them. Education must remain above politics and politicians and governments must join hands to enable the country to fulfil its obligations to its citizens and to its international commitments.

3. Authentic/reliable data for good planning

The process of collecting and disseminating data is full of flaws, which can lead to plans being based on defective or incomplete information. Data is available either at the provincial or the federal level, and districts are not allowed to disseminate or use the information unless the Federal or Provincial Government has vetted it. Consequently, district authorities do not use the information for planning. Alarmingly, the information collected for Provincial and Federal governments does not correlate with the information that district education departments use. It was noticed that information collection forms provided by the government to schools were not user friendly, but were complicated and imprecise, which caused

teachers to frequently fill these forms incorrectly. Also, Information Communication Technology resources available within the government were not being used to their full capacity. Data from one government department could not be co-related with data from other departments because it was not available. There are numerous sections within the Education Ministry and other relevant departments, such as Education Management Information System (EMIS), that have been set up. However, even the data collected by these bodies could not be co-related. This situation needs to be urgently addressed. Data should be freely accessible to all stakeholders, including NGOs. There is also a need to standardize the information, which is made available to all for planning and monitoring.

- a) The government should focus on improving the collection and compilation of authentic information and statistics.
- b) Education officials should be trained to utilize Information Communication Technology (ICT) resources.
- c) A centralized data collection system that compiles and disseminates data to all stakeholders, should be established.

4. Curriculum that addresses modern day needs and is relevant to people's lives

Learning is confined only to prescribed texts and often does not relate to the realities of life. School, as an institution, does not have space for community engagement and interaction. Mother languages and local knowledge are totally ignored. Thus, education, society and students are not correlated. Places such as home, community, playground, literary sittings, and libraries are not given importance as learning spaces. The result is that the community is silently withdrawing from the education scene. This is evident in the massive dropout from schools and in the lack of participation, especially in the rural areas.

The education system should be revisited from nursery to the highest level to clearly focus on new knowledge, life skills, analytical thinking, and dynamic perspectives in consonance with social and economic realities. The curriculum must reflect values outlined in the Child Rights Charter, peace, tolerance and democracy, be regularly updated and conform to the best international standards.

5. Community participation in school affairs through SMCs/PTAs

The study found the existence of some form of PTAs/SMCs in many districts. However, as with other components of school education, this component too was politicized. The committees were not organized properly, and at many places were completely missing. School Councils need to be freed from political interference; trained for effective monitoring of teachers, quality of education being delivered, and how accounts are being handled.

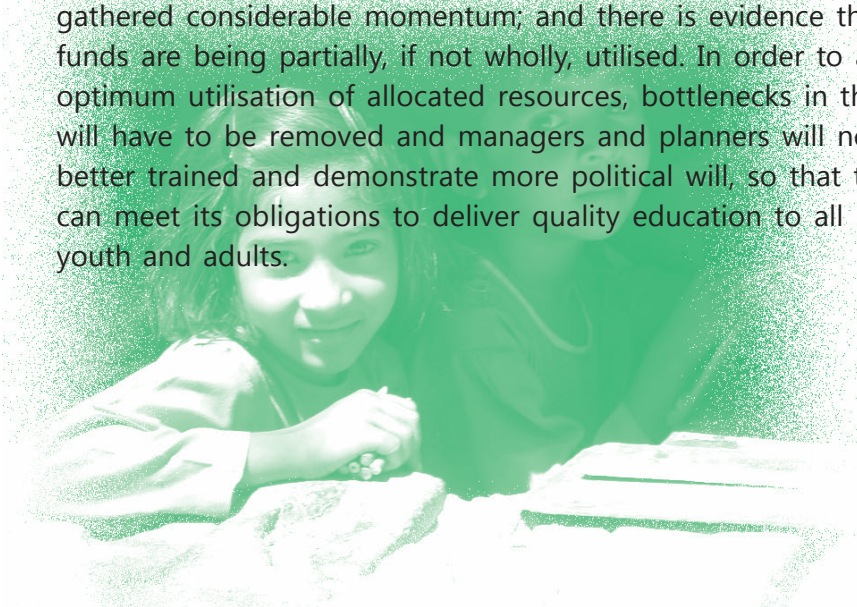
6. Effective monitoring

It was observed that education department officials at the grassroots level either do not have sufficient resources for monitoring of schools, or their monitoring skills are weak.

The government must focus on strengthening monitoring capacity in education department officials and provide them with sufficient resources.

One of the major findings of the study was that the education is being addressed in isolation as a separate component and its multi-sectoral connections are not being taken into account. There is a need to address education not only as a priority issue, but also through an incremental and multi-sectoral approach.

In the end, it needs to be reiterated that compared to the past, the situation has improved; the available facts and figures indicate that the flow of funds from the federal to the provincial and district levels has gathered considerable momentum; and there is evidence that these funds are being partially, if not wholly, utilised. In order to achieve optimum utilisation of allocated resources, bottlenecks in the system will have to be removed and managers and planners will need to be better trained and demonstrate more political will, so that the country can meet its obligations to deliver quality education to all its children, youth and adults.



Acronyms Used:

ADEO	Assistant District Education Officers
AJK	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
DEO	District Education Officers
EDO	Executive District Officer
EDO (F&P)	Executive District Officer (Finance and Planning)
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESR	Education Sector Reforms
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GST	General Sales Tax
ICT	Information Communication Technology
LC	Learning Coordinators
LGO	Local Government Ordinance 2001
NWFP	North Western Frontier Province
PESRP	Punjab Education Sector Reforms Program
PFC	Provincial Finance Commission
PTAs	Parents Teachers Associations
PTSMCs	Parents Teachers School Management Committees
SCs	School Councils
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

Notes:

1. District governments have been given the functional responsibility for delivering elementary and secondary education, primary and secondary health, agriculture, and intra-district roads. Towns and *tehsils* have been assigned municipal service responsibilities — including local roads and streets, water supply and sanitation.
2. The complete document is available at http://www.nrb.gov.pk/local_government/default.asp
3. Generally, a *tehsil* consists of a city or town that serves as its headquarters, possibly additional towns, and a number of villages — as one of two intermediate levels of local administration.
4. Community participation is envisaged through formation of SMCs/PTAs/SCs, which is an old concept started in the early 1990s and is still in existence. However, these entities are informal representative bodies with no potential authority.

References:

- Fiske, E. B. (1996). *Decentralization of Education: Politics and Consensus*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Siddiqui, S. (2007, July 17). Overselling Literacy *The News*. Pakistan National Education Census 2006-2007.

Participants in the Research		
Region	Organization	Districts
NWFP	Khwendo Kor	Dir Mansehra Khyber Agency
	Strengthening Participatory Organization	D. I. Khan
	Silver line	Kohat
	Child Rights Committee	Swabi
Sindh	HWA foundation	Ghotki
	Indus Resource Centre	Khairpur Jamshoro
	SAFWCO	Sanghar
	Community Development Network Organization	Jacobabad
Punjab	Strengthening Participatory Organization	Multan
	Alasar Organization	D.G. Khan
	Taraqiate Sanjh	Mianwali
	Idara Talem-o-Agehi	Sheikupura Jhang
Balochistan	Institute for Development Studies and Practices	Khuzdar
		Loralai Pishin
Islamabad	Peace, Education and Development Foundation	Noshki Sibi
Azad Jammu and Kashmir	Idara Talem-o-Agehi	Federal
AJK		
Research Coordinated by SPO-NC , Islamabad		

Note: The full report of this EdWatch study can be requested from the Pakistan Coalition for Education, whose address can be found at the back cover.



(Continued from inside front cover)

RWS found the need for pursuing a vigorous, evidence-based policy advocacy to build shared understanding and rally civil society organizations (CSOs) around common goals, establish credibility with opinion-framers and decision-makers, marshal evidence as part of a systematic strategy to influence policy, and supply missing data on excluded and unreached sectors. Campaign calls and messages needed to be supported by credible evidence, based on the real state of education in communities.

Asia-South Pacific Education Watch Initiative and Publications

These publications are the result of education watch processes initiated and pursued since 2006 by the RWS programme of ASPBAE and GCE, in partnership with national education coalitions from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea.

Building on the successful Education Watch model implemented by CAMPE in Bangladesh, the Asia-South Pacific Education Watch (EdWatch) was designed and coordinated by the RWS Steering Committee composed of ASPBAE, Education International, and GlobalMarch Against Child Labor, and the RWS Asia Pacific staff.

EdWatch has emerged as an independent, citizen-based monitoring mechanism for assessing the status of education at the regional, national, and local levels, providing well-founded bases for advocacy and education campaign work and strengthening CSO capacities for policy engagement in education. It is designed to track governments' progress in achieving quality education for all, with focus on addressing the education deficit for disadvantaged sectors.

All Edwatch reports are independent reports and do not necessarily reflect the views of all the members of the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

Challenge to Civil Society

The daunting education situation in the region poses a challenge to CSOs to sound a clear wake-up call to governments to shake off their complacency, go beyond rhetoric, summon the political will, and redouble efforts. There is a crying need to assess existing education programmes, allocate more funds and resources for education, and institute targeted measures to address education disadvantage.

Since Dakar 2000, CSO participation in EFA processes has seen the progressive growth in strength and maturity of national education coalitions, and their developing capacity to conduct research and policy analysis and advocacy. Armed with their EdWatch findings, CSOs and education stakeholders can put together more coherent education policy agenda for lobbying, disseminate information to enhance public awareness of education issues, effectively engage governments in education planning and policy-making, and strongly assert and sharpen CSO and stakeholders' participation in education governance at all levels.



Pakistan Coalition for Education

National Secretariat Office
C/o Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO)
House 429, Street 11, F-10/2, Islamabad
Tel: (+92-51) 2104679-80 Fax: (+92-51) 2112787
nationalsecretariat@pcep.org



Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE)

c/o MAAPL - 9th Floor, Eucharistic Congress Building
No.35, Convent Street, Colaba
Mumbai – 400 039, India.
Tel: 91-22-2202 1391 / 2283 6853 Fax: 91-22-2283 2217
Email: aspbae@vsnl.com; Web: <http://www.aspbae.org>

Members and affiliates of



Global Campaign for Education

6th Floor, Nedbank Gardens, 33 Bath Avenue, Rosebank
Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 447 4111 Fax: +27 11 447 4138
www.campaignforeducation.org