



**Webinar**

**Brief 76:2021**

# Literacy, Development, and Philanthropy:

## Educating One Million Children

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**Pakistan Institute of Development Economics**



PAKISTAN INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT  
ECONOMICS, ISLAMABAD

# Literacy, Development, and Philanthropy: Educating One Million Children



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**MONDAY**

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VIRTUAL SESSION



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## Preamble

In June of 2021, *Alight* completed a seminal development project on the education of out-of-school children in Pakistan – successfully managing to enroll over a million kids over 3.5 years with the generosity of the Education Above All Foundation in Qatar and the assistance of its various local partners. The objective of this webinar is to explore the EAC consortium's strategy in terms of social mobilization, technical innovation, stakeholder engagement, girls' education, capacity building, curriculum design, and non-formal schooling. It is hoped that this webinar serves to initiate a much-needed conversation on the state of literacy in Pakistan, charting a framework for its resolution through creative, transparent, accountable, and adequate development that leverages the best aspects of both the public and private sectors.

## Key Messages

This webinar focused on different aspects of education in Pakistan that policymakers still neglected at many levels. Dr. Cheema explained the fact that Pakistan is 2<sup>nd</sup> largest by illiteracy index. Even in this globalized world, 10% of the population is unable to get an education. To make education better, we need to develop a national vision for it. We should focus on the quality of education provided. Further on, Mr. Abid Gill added that Pakistan has two significant issues: 62 million people can't read and write, and the other issue in Pakistan is the high literacy rate. 40% of the Pakistani population is literate and 60% illiterate. Of these, 51% comes under rural literacy, and the rural women ratio is 28%. To enhance the knowledge of our youth, we need to improve their skill set. The out-of-school ratio in Pakistan is 22.8 million. The main contributors in this ratio include the

Individuals that suffer from disasters  
Refugees  
Individuals living in remote areas with no educational facility  
Mobility of females to go to school due to different cultural practices  
Minority groups and low-income families  
Child labor  
Health and Disability  
No internet facilities and irrelevant education

Mr. Adnan added that there is a link between GDP and education. With the decrease in GDP, there will be an increase in the illiteracy rate and out-of-school ratio. One way to overcome this illiteracy issue is by using digital methodologies; teaching the World Foundation is trying to overcome illiteracy using digital methods, primarily working in remote areas. Dr. Zahid said that Digital literacy in Pakistan is doing well due to affordable internet packages. For example, Allama Iqbal open university has introduced a virtual learning system by providing students with cheap internet packages to get 40-50 GBs in just 500 rupees. Tele-schools and programs on the radio played a crucial role in the COVID-19 pandemic. The current pandemic boasted an overall online education system.

Dr. Cheema added that another issue is with conventional learning. 80% of the individuals employed have traditional learning. But conventional learning is not applicable for the future. We need vocational education to develop skills as we have already worked on accelerated learning, distant learning, and non-formal education. As GDP and development are linked with education, it's necessary to work with different stakeholders to make the system efficient and effective. Other programs like educating one million children constitute \$300-\$400 per child per year. With collaboration among Qatar programs, JICA, and the Government of Pakistan, we spend \$100 per child per year, and later on, 10 lakh students come under the system. With these 10 lakh students, there will be a decrease in illiteracy along with many illegal activities like crime, robbery, etc. To make the system more flexible for girls' mobility, female teachers are hired to satisfy the parents. We collaborated with 41 stakeholders to execute this program efficiently. Those stakeholders include government and private institutes, intellectuals; tech companies; funding partners, etc.

If we solve the issue of out-of-school students, Mr. Abid Gill added that we need to bring time flexibility, course duration; new teaching methodology; uniforms, etc. There should be gender equitability; to fulfill the needs of different targeted groups; to recognize the prior knowledge of the out-of-school students to develop a new skill set; there should be competency; and it should be culturally suitable, relevant, and acceptable. Some major solutions that were worked upon include ALP (Accelerated Learning Program). In this, overaged children and those with no formal education are targeted. The project is for 30-32 months, wherein the end primary level equivalence certificate is provided. After graduating, these students can get into formal education, elementary education, and vocational training institutes. The ALP- Primary equivalence model saw that it is more efficient than the traditional models of 60-72 months.

To accelerate learning, Students having prior knowledge can skip the packages or a portion of it depending upon the knowledge they constitute. In the ALP Elementary method, the targeted individuals are primary graduates, but due to lack of schools, they could not study, and those who don't have access to formal schools. It's mainly a 16–18-month program. After graduation, a certificate is provided, which leads them to some future pathways like formal education, secondary education, and even vocational training.

Mr. Adnan shed light on how the world is using digital platforms. There is a concept of micro-school, where in one classroom there are 20-25 students using tablets and educational games to learn Urdu, English, and Math. There's no need for a full-time teacher in these classrooms, and you only need an attendant who can take care of things. The government also partnered to work in these schools. These techniques make students perform better than the traditional schools. There are five micro-schools in Karachi and Lahore. The cost per student is \$55 per year, where 3-5 students share one tablet over 5 shifts. This model is more cost-effective and efficient than the traditional models.

Dr. Zahid added that everyone is trying to work on their own to solve the issues, but governments need to play their role and work upon them. The Solution to these issues could be to look at national institutes of open schooling, which are community-based learning centers. The mandate of AIOU is an example of this which works on practical learning,

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as its an open school but still the number of out of school children increases. Free education is provided up to matric in GB, Kashmir; Interior Sindh; and Baluchistan. The disabled, marginalized, and transgender people are also provided with accessible education facilities. But after all, these governments should work upon something to facilitate the students. While building a school, the distance between two schools should be less to go to different schools quickly.

Mr. Abid Gill, in the end, added that we need educational reforms. Our focus should be on bottom-up approaches and decentralization of power and to use alternative methodologies. He further added that parents are not in favor of teaching their children. Either they can't afford it, or they believe that there is no use for education. So for this, we need two solutions: social safety programs and making education meaningful, so students can learn something that will benefit them, like vocational training. Dr. Cheema added that we need a national-level vision with human-centered approaches. Mr. Adnan said that with new methodologies, the most efficient is to include digital learning schooling for the students and support these programs. Dr. Zahid said we should also opt for alternate flexible educational reforms like open schooling, i.e., tele schools, radio classes, etc.

Dr. Cheema added on a question that asked what should be taught to students that we have to give vocational training, especially to the secondary level graduates, as most of them can't afford to go to universities. By this, they can have a proper skill set to earn a living and utilize their knowledge. Dr. Zahid added that we need to have relevance between universities and the market to overcome these issues. We need to research what the market demands so that the educational system can be reimagined and reformed.



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