

INFORMATION BRIEF

BRIDGING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR GOVERNMENTS (B-TAG)



GOAL

INTER-PROVINCIAL COORDINATION CONFERENCE:

Reforming School Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab

Girls And Out of School: Action for Learning (GOAL) represents a major UK aid investment in education across the two Pakistan provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). These investments have supported numerous successes and improved practices in each province and contributed to several high-level education policy reforms, interventions, and innovations, directly improving equitable access to quality education in both provinces.

For all these achievements, the natural and significant areas of common interest shared by the two provinces, and the scale of the potential benefits of knowledge sharing, there has never been a forum to exchange the learning captured in each state.

In autumn 2023, GOAL Bridging Technical Assistance for Governments (B-TAG) sought to fill this gap by providing a platform for facilitating the exchange of insights, successes, and challenges which have emerged over the decade of reforms. Convened by the Institute of Social and Policy Sciences (I-SAPS)¹, which promotes Pakistan specific knowledge and undertakes research to inform public policy dialogue for sustainable development, the Inter-Provincial Coordination Conference marked a new moment for the transfer of knowledge and insights for education reform in Pakistan,

This Information Brief considers the background to this event, its objectives, and achievements and the assesses the landscape for future similar inter-provincial platforms.

Background

UK aid's support for education in Pakistan has been marked by a decade of extraordinary advancements in educational policies and practices. Notably, however, there has been an absence of interprovincial exchange and learning to accompany, celebrate and accelerate this progress. The evolution of GOAL as a vehicle for FCDO engagement in the education sector across the two provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa made this absence more significant.

Girls and Out of School: Action for Learning (GOAL), is supporting the governments of Punjab and KPK to improve outcomes for girls and the most marginalised. GOAL focuses on two main priorities. In Punjab and KPK's least developed districts, it will directly support around 250,000 marginalised children to enrol and stay in school. It will also support an additional 150,000 girls to read by age 10.

Over the programme period, GOAL will improve learning outcomes for at least 16.9 million children (7.8 million girls) by strengthening the provincial education systems to improve the quality and equity of education, particularly the quality of teaching, and becoming more resilient post-Covid. The programme will directly support children to access education and learning in several Commonwealth countries.

**GOAL will improve learning
outcomes for at least**

16.9 million children
(7.8 million girls)



The Inter-Provincial Coordination Conference supported by B-TAG and convened by I-SAPS aimed to deepen understanding of learning achieved to date and, in doing so, establish a platform for ongoing exchange of information and views between the two provinces.

Taking place over two days at the start of October, the conference set out to address these needs and the following three key objectives:

Engage government leadership by providing a space for high-level policy dialogue from both provincial departments to help bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that discussions are grounded in evidence from the field and opportunities emerging from their respective experiences.

Ensure ongoing commitment to supporting and owning the UK's support for education reforms and translating into concrete actions resulting in high impact.

Foster a community of practice by bringing together education department officials from Punjab and KPK.

The event was hosted by the Government of KPK at the KP House in Islamabad in recognition of its significance to education in the region and featured sessions on everything from CPD and supply side challenges to assessments and the future direction of GOAL.

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Delegates in a thematic group

Conference structure

The inaugural conference session featured a welcome note from Mr Motasim Billah Shah, Secretary E&SED, Government of KP and recognition by Mr. Ahmad Ali, Team Leader for GOAL Bridging Technical Assistance for Governments (B-TAG), of both impressive strides made by both governments in expanding access to quality education but also the pressing need for greater emphasis on girls and marginalised groups, along with effective measures to tackle the issue of learning poverty.

The inaugural session was followed by a series of seven technical sessions covering access and supply side challenges, Quality Education (Assessment), Quality Education (Continuous Professional Development, Equity and Inclusion, Public-private partnerships (PPP) and the role of private sector, Data Management and Monitoring for Results and Looking Ahead: Identifying Actions for the Next Quarter and Agenda for the Next IPCC. Policy actions and agenda items highlighted in this final technical session will be the foundation for future collaboration and policy discussions related to inter-provincial coordination and collaboration between the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, KP and School Education Department, Punjab.



Delegates in a thematic group

The conference ended with Ms Kalsoom Saqib, Special Secretary, School Education Department, Government of Punjab emphasising the importance of collaborating across institutions, departments, and provinces to avoid duplicity of efforts and to meet the dire challenges facing Pakistan's education sector.

Mr. Graham Gaas, Group Head of Health and Education at FCDO, added that expanding girls' access to education, strengthening formative assessments, promoting awareness about climate change, and developing systems to combat its negative impact were all crucial to unlocking the full potential of the education sector and creating a brighter future for all.



Inaugural session

Conference achievements

The Inter-Provincial Coordination Conference was a landmark event which attracted the Secretaries of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Departments, Special Secretaries, and entire departments of both provinces (administrative and technical heads) and enabled the first ever forum for conversation about programme successes, learnings, and challenges.

Beyond helping consolidate learning around FCDO's previous investments in education, it provided invaluable intelligence with which to inform future investment of the UK in education in these two provinces, particularly under GOAL.

The presence of the key decision-makers and an FCDO development director ensured that insights, suggestions, and learnings would inform the decision-making in both provinces and translate into actionable outcomes.

Further, it:

Facilitated in-depth discussion between administrative and technical heads of both the provincial education departments across key thematic areas, including access, quality, examination, training, continuous professional development etc.

Promoted unprecedented levels of cross-learning as members of each department detailed their institutional arrangements, governance milieus, reforms, and initiatives.

Demonstrated the high levels of GOAL ownership by both the provincial governments.

Allowed significant success in Punjab to be calibrated for implementation in KPK within an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual learning, and vice versa.

Considered, debated, and fine-tuned innovative methods of designing, introducing, and implementing reforms, especially for Girls Education, for the realities of both provinces. In particular, issues of equity and inclusive education for marginalised segments of society were considered.

Inspired extensive debates around issues of climate change and resilience. These contributed to a larger discourse of climate resiliency enriched by the unique experiences of both provinces in their fight against climate change.



Discussions in the concluding session



Concluding group

Next steps

I-SAPS aims to build upon the insights gained during the event by consistently organizing similar inter-provincial conferences. Moreover, the School Education Department of Punjab has recognized the value of these conferences and has agreed to host the next event. Each subsequent inter-provincial conference is expected to be hosted alternately by the two departments. This substantial commitment from both departments underscores the importance of interprovincial dialogue and communication.

Learn more: www.i-saps.org



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