

FCDO Funding and Impact for Deaf Education in Pakistan

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INTRODUCTION TO DEAF REACH SCHOOLS

Family Educational Services Foundation (FESF) is a non-profit, educational organization committed to enhancing the quality of life and education of the disadvantaged of Pakistan, with particular focus on deaf children and youth.

To this end, FESF's Deaf Reach Program provides academic and vocational education to deaf students throughout Pakistan, particularly in rural areas with little or no access to formal education for the Deaf.

Deaf Reach Schools, Sindh are currently operational in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Nawabshah and Rashidabad - Tando Allahyar.

Deaf Reach is one of the only schools for the Deaf in Pakistan with a branch network in rural areas. The majority of students come from low socio-economic backgrounds and are on full scholarship.

Following are the key components of the Deaf Reach Program:

- a. **Academic and Vocational Skills Training:** Deaf Reach Schools provide a nurturing environment where deaf students can develop their full potential and increase opportunities for self-sufficiency. Using a holistic approach, the schools offer academic and skills training in a variety of fields to help students maximize opportunities for success.

Classes start from KG thru class 12, followed by a BA Program for higher education. The students are provided a rich academic curriculum including art, drama and sports. The skills training includes culinary arts, sewing, embroidery, weaving, arts/crafts, IT, and more.

In teaching the Deaf, literacy and numeracy skills are a major area of focus as a basic educational building block. Thus, extra time and attention is invested in each child in this regard, with a high usage of visual aid materials.

- b. **Parent Training Program:** Deaf Reach provides services and training to assist parents in communicating with their children. The Parent Training Program has been very successful since its inception, with over 300 parents trained on a yearly basis across 5 schools.
- c. **Teacher Training Program:** Deaf Reach has a successful Teacher Training Program to train candidates in the field of Deaf Education, with graduates going on to become teachers of the Deaf in the Deaf Reach school system. There are presently 125 salaried teachers working in the five schools, and 50% of the teaching staff are deaf themselves, the majority of whom are former Deaf Reach students.
- d. **Deaf Management Training Program:** We are committed to organic growth and inclusion, and have worked diligently with deaf senior staff members to help them grow in the organization and take on responsibility. We are proud to state that we have management teams with Deaf and Hearing partnerships in all the branches, with Deaf personnel taking an active leading role. There is also a Regional Schools Management team comprised of both Deaf and Hearing persons.
- e. **Marketable Skills / Financial Inclusion / Job Placement Program:** The Training Centers provide job placement services for its graduates. In the past years over 1,000 young deaf men and women have been provided employment. There is an active curricula, equipping students with the practical and vocational skills necessary for this underserved population

to secure paying positions. Micro-enterprise schemes assisting young deaf men and women to earn a livelihood are also being planned wherein handicrafts, art, embroidered goods etc. are created and marketed. Courses have been certified under the supervision of the Trade Testing Board (Govt. of Sindh): Basic Information Technology, Teacher Training, Culinary Arts, Stitching & Embroidery, and Language Skills.

Additionally, employment schemes create community awareness, helping members of the community to be more understanding, inclusive, and appreciative of the contribution that can be made by Deaf individuals.

- f. **Pakistan Sign Language Development:** Deaf Reach developed a Pakistan Sign Language (PSL) digital Dictionary. This was made available via an online website (www.psl.org.pk), as a phone application, and a print dictionary accompanied by a DVD. These resources provide a standardized language resource for deaf students and parents, and is being used country wide. The digital PSL content has been an invaluable tool for all those involved in Deaf education, greatly aiding in the training of teachers and interpreters for the Deaf.

THE SENSA PROGRAM, SPONSORED BY FCDO

Phase 1 & 2: Sponsorship of academic program for class 1 – 5

The first and second phase of the program focuses on the above detailed education and skills training of Deaf children, the majority of whom (98%) are on full scholarship. The costs involved per student include additional focus on literacy and numeracy skills, which are the building blocks in Deaf education for students to master advanced learning. Visual aids are used extensively and are an important teaching tool. Additionally, a lower than average (as per mainstream schools) teacher: student ratio is required due to the children’s special needs. Both of these factors account for somewhat higher cost per student.

Additional costs: Additional costs per student include the following which are sponsored via donations and make it possible for the children to attend school: Pick/drop transportation; uniforms; healthy lunch; school supplies, vocational supplies etc. The FCDO funding under the SENSA Program was an integral part of making sustainability and growth possible.

Students Sponsored under the FCDO funded SENSA Program for Phase 1 and Phase 2

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|----------|-----|
| Karachi: | 72 |
| Sukkur: | 46 |
| Total: | 118 |

Phase 3: Sponsorship of the distance learning program for class 1 - 3

The third phase of the funding covered the development of digital learning resources in sign language during the Covid related school closure. Under this program, our students of Class 1 – 3 were provided digital curricular content in sign language across four subjects: Math, Science, English and Urdu along with support materials. The aim was to prevent language loss and continue learning during school closure in the pandemic.

PROGRAM AIMS

The aim of the programs funded by FCDO were 3-fold:

1. Sponsor students' education (numeracy, literacy and sign language vocabulary) and skills training.
2. Build capacity in Teachers of the Deaf
3. Provide digital learning materials to students during Covid school closure to ensure continued learning and prevent language loss.

How long did the program run?

1st agreement: 1 July 2016 - 30 June 2017

80 student's monthly sponsorship

Amount = PKR 768,000

2nd agreement: 1 August 2017 - 31 March 2021

118 student's monthly sponsorship

Amount = PKR 15,605,380

3rd agreement: Sep 2020 - March 2021

Distance Learning Program – Covid Response Activity

Amount = PKR 5,589,920

How much funding was received overall?

Approximately PKR 21,963,300

Were the desired outcomes achieved by the end of it?

Our schools and students greatly benefited from the support this opportunity afforded. The majority of our students are from low socio-economic backgrounds. In Karachi, they come from the areas of Baldia, Shah Faisal Colony, Korangi, Site, etc. In the rural schools the majority of students come from outlying villages in a 40 km. radius of the schools. We provide pick/drop transport making it possible for them to attend school as they have no other educational opportunities. If not given this opportunity for an education in Deaf Reach Schools, they would remain illiterate and un-enrolled. By the end of the program we achieved our target of

completing the yearly education of the primary level children sponsored under the first and second agreement. Further, in phase 3 the students of class 1 -3 across all our schools were facilitated with the Distance Learning Program during Covid related school closure.

What impact did this have on the program's recipients?

Students who were sponsored in the first and second agreement completed their yearly curriculum of academic learning. They all were promoted to the next academic level.

Students were provided a safe environment with pick and drop services, nutritious hot lunches and school supplies. They completed a year of peer group based learning and continued to develop their social and interpersonal skills as part of our holistic learning program.

Teachers who were enrolled in the capacity building program were provided training with regards to building pedagogy based learning programs, increasing student engagement and improving classroom management to achieve improved Teacher Learning Outcomes.

How was this measured?

Since the program focused on student learning outcomes and teacher capacity building the program effectiveness was measured in two ways for both the populations.

The students were selected for a baseline, midline and end line study and learning outcomes were computed and analyzed. For the teachers, a teacher competency framework was developed under the close supervision of the SENSEA team and multiple trainings were conducted. Following this a teacher competency test was conducted to determine the impact of the capacity building activities.

During the first two agreements monthly monitoring visits were conducted by the SENSEA team and reports generated by them were shared with FCDO. During the 3rd agreement initiated in the pandemic the monthly visits were switched to online meetings and discussions as the students were learning from home.

Monthly project reports and final project reports were shared with the concerned department heads in FCDO for phase three. SENSEA continued to report directly to FCDO for their consultative role in Phase three. These reports were reviewed and any queries raised by the funding agency - FCDO, or by the consulting partner - SENSEA, were sent back to FESF for a response. After further discussions all challenges and queries were highlighted and recommendations for improvement of key aspects were implemented during the course of the program.

SUSTAINABILITY AND PARTNERSHIPS OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAM

As a result of the partnership and program sponsorships offered by FCDO, we were able to secure further opportunities for program support and create awareness and networking for our program.

Research grant funded by EdTech Hub, UK

One such partnership was with the EdTech Hub in UK, a connection initiated by FCDO. We secured a grant to test the critical beliefs that framed the Distance Learning Program and conduct robust research over a period of 6 months. This grant also offered the opportunity to network with EdTech

focused organizations across the world and develop a joint learning platform. We were able to implement a small project in Gaza, Palestine in partnership with a school for the deaf to test the digital learning resources and document their impact on the deaf students. The program was showcased to leading EdTech and Special Ed partners at the close of the grant.

Networking opportunities created via the FCDO partnerships

Founder/Director Richard Geary attended a consultancy meeting led by Ian Attfield at the UK head office of FCDO prior to the Global Disability Conference to create greater awareness about the challenges of Deaf Education, particularly in developing nations.

One of our older deaf students, Ms. Rabia Aslam, was chosen as one of only two attendees to represent Pakistan at the Global Disability Conference in London, in July 2018.

We have been able to partner with the British Council in the International Connecting Classrooms Program, and were winners of the International School Award (ISA) in November 2017. It is notable that ours was the only school for the Deaf enrolled in this global program.

APPENDIX:

Attached sample of monthly report for Agreement 1, Agreement 2 and Agreement 3.

Attached project closing report for Agreement 3.