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SUCCESS STORY

Making Sindh A Happy Reading Province

Sindh Reading Program's efforts to instate a 35-min reading period in all public primary schools is yielding unprecedented results. We are delivering beyond literacy. We are preserving a language; a culture.

Mitigating Reading Failure



Group of children enjoying story books at the SRP established in-class reading corner. For them, Sindhi is not a day-to-day language any more. They are rediscovering the soul and expression of their thoughts by reading Sindhi stories during the daily reading period.



Young ones can now enjoy reading more and more with their parents and grandparents. The 35-minute reading period allows children to borrow books for home on daily basis.

Sindh is home to the world's earliest university, and a proud owner of the planet's oldest language. With a rich culture of arts and literature flowing through its veins in days gone by, it is alarming to see how the province's four million children are becoming part of the growing uneducated population of the country today. Nearly 32 percent of primary school-goers are unable to read a single word of grade-level text in Sindhi or Urdu, while approximately 67 percent cannot read a story in either language.

We saw it as a deepening crisis at USAID Sindh Reading Program (SRP), posing a serious threat to Sindh government's commitment to reform its education sector and strengthen systems.

To counter the situation, SRP engaged in vigorous advocacy with key policy makers, along with Sindh Basic Education Program and the sister Pakistan Reading Project. These efforts culminated in Sindh's Education and Literacy Department (ELD) issuing a notification to all primary public schools to include a 35-minute reading period in their classroom schedules on daily basis.

"We don't have a book store in my village; never had one. This year when SRP developed a reading corner in my school, I was overwhelmed. I have never seen more books outside my school bag. I wanted to be in that corner all day long. The colors and photos have always intrigued my imagination, but we didn't have the luxury of time. We could only read if the teacher was absent or late to school. But then one day our teacher announced that we will have a daily reading period in which we will be allowed to read books and also take them home. Our excitement saw no end and since then there is no stopping us." said Mohammed Saleem, 12, Grade 5. Since the reading period has been implemented in his school, Saleem has become a passionate story-teller and a vivid imaginer. "I want to write stories for children when I grow up." he added.

According to Ahmed Ali, the SRP-trained teacher at Government Boys School, Larkana, the outcomes of a reading period are invaluable. "They (children) have developed love and respect for books. Importantly, they have developed love for their language. Together, the reading period and SRP's supplementary books are exposing children in this small village to a bigger universe out there, which is vital for their grooming at this age. SRP's contributions are precious."

The dedicated reading period is also defining specific time for teachers to use scripted lesson plans and supplementary learning and teaching materials provided by SRP.

Saleem's bench mate, Mohsin also has similar thoughts to echo. "We are taking full advantage of the reading period. My fluency has increased, and I can write better, grammatically and conceptually. The books I am reading, leave me with lifelong lessons at the end of 35 minutes. I am thankful to USAID."