



USAID | PAKISTAN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUCCESS STORY

From Bullets to Books – A Tale of Two Towns

The library development work of Sindh Reading Program is providing a recreational refuge to Lyari and Orangi Town as they journey through an era of political turbulence and social unrest.

Before & After



By increasing the level of exposure and interaction within a literacy-rich milieu, children will have a chance to create personal connections to text, utilize background knowledge and integrate new concepts.



Our materials are structured to promote multiple pathways to the exploration of literacy concepts via social cooperation, shared experiences, and open expression.

“Breathing burnt gun powder every morning and reeling from the shots of AK 47 and TT pistol before going to bed, are a big part of my growing up in Lyari. I know more names of Lyari gang war leaders than our national heroes. And I don’t feel proud when I say this. I feel sorry. I feel sorry for having to live amidst terror and gore all these years, and not knowing what it is like to be a normal teenager in a normal town,” said Mustafa Mughal, 18, resident of Lyari Town Karachi.

For nearly half a century, Lyari has seen more young people graduating from roadside goons to gang war kings, than graduating from a formal academic institution. Modern schools, libraries, community centers etc. are a far cry.

“Or maybe we thought they were a far cry until USAID Sindh Reading Program re-launched the Lyari Textbook Library in our area earlier this year. We had almost abandoned this space because of its ghostly, run down infrastructure,” continues Mughal.

USAID Sindh Reading Program breathed a new soul into the turbulent social life of Lyari Town by upgrading the local Textbook Library and re-launching it in January 2016.

“Layers of dust on the books, broken chairs and musty smell made it impossible to stay here for more than ten minutes. I am amazed to see how this place has morphed in under four months. I have never seen more people visiting this place before.

USAID’s work in libraries is a monumental step toward improving children and youth’s access to supplementary reading material, and establishing interactive reading spaces.

“For young people like me, it is a great refuge from the outer world. It provides us the very space to concentrate on our studies or just hang around the place for leisure reading in free time. We can, otherwise, very conveniently fall into the hands of local gangs who are always on the lookout for idle young people,” said Mughal.

SRP re-launched a similar facility, Hali Library, in Orangi Town in January 2016. Orangi Town, the Asia’s largest slum, riddles with uninterrupted extremism and notorious police encounters in the dead of night.

Standing in the middle of a ghettoed community, where houses are visibly perforated with bullets and shells, the SRP-supported Hali Library embodies hope and optimism. With 3,800 new books, ICT equipment and a trained staff, Hali Library has a lot to offer to its readers and inspire a culture of reading in Orangi Town.