

INEE Minimum Standards Case Study: Responding to Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

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Background and Context

The Refugees Education Program (REP) began in 1992 by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and provides education to Afghan refugees in Khyber Pakhtun Khwa. Following the exit strategy, the program was handed over to the **Participatory Rural Development Society (PRDS)**, a National NGO on October 1, 2010. Currently, the program manages 15 schools located in impoverished communities in Peshawar, Mardan and Swabi (9 urban & 6 camp – based). All 15 schools have been providing quality educational services to around 10,000 Afghan refugee children (63% girls & 37% boys) in different areas of Peshawar, Pakistan. The Afghan refugees speak both Dari and Pashto and hail from the north and southeast, as well as Kabul and surrounding rural areas.

The schools have functional School Management Committee (SMC) networks made up of school principals and teachers. The SMC networks create a sound teaching and learning atmosphere by planning relevant educational activities, managing and implementing educational and administrative decisions and involving community members in decision-making by arranging meetings with them. These schools are officially registered with the Afghan Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Afghan Consulate General in Peshawar. The schools implement the official Afghan Curriculum and follow Afghan MoE policies, rules and regulations. The management staff of REP/ PRDS is collaborating with MoE officials and other stakeholders in Kabul to facilitate the seamless process of reintegration and repatriation of Afghan students and teachers. PRDS also issues school-leaving certificates duly signed by Afghan Education Attaché to the students and teachers who want to repatriate.

Application

PRDS is committed to working in the best interests of underprivileged and vulnerable communities. REP staff members use the INEE Foundational Standards of Community Participation and Resources. Community mobilizers hold meetings with each of the 15 communities once a month. SMC network and REP team members together discuss issues, find solutions and share with the community. The majority of the community members cannot afford donations but they provide in-kind support. They help with school maintenance by constructing and repairing the walls, washrooms or wherever needs arise. Community resources are fully utilized as all the staff members including head teachers, teachers, SMC members and guards are from the local community. The communities own the schools.

Access and learning environment also played a key role in the enrolment of girls in the schools; there are more girls than boys in REP schools. Thirteen out of 15 schools have clean drinking water from wells, hand pumps and tap water. The 2 schools that lack this facility bring water from the nearest mosques. All the schools have proper walls and they are well protected, which encourages more parents to send their daughters to school. Also, female staff members were recruited in all high schools for separate girls' sections. In this way, learning environments are "secure and safe and promote the protection... of learners, teachers and other education personnel" (INEE Minimum Standards, 2010, pg. 61).

According to **Guidance Note 3 under Teaching and Learning Standard 1** ("Formal curricula and examinations used in the education of refugees and internally displaced people are recognized by home and host governments"), PRDS collaborates with the Afghan Ministry of Education both in Kabul and Peshawar. The Afghan Consulate in Peshawar issues certificates to all students studying in Pakistan who passed the 12th grade; the Afghan Education Attaché in Peshawar and officials from the MoE regularly visit the schools and collaborate with PRDS to organize trainings. REP collaborates with MoE officials in Kabul to facilitate the seamless process of reintegration and repatriation of Afghan students and teachers. PRDS also issues school-leaving certificates duly signed by the Afghan Education Attaché for students and teachers who want to repatriate.

Moreover, **Teaching and Learning Standard 2 – Training, Professional Development and Support** was conducive for the delivery of services and the mentoring programs in the schools which are crucial to build the capacity of schoolteachers. Both SMC network members and the schools' 39 mentors receive "periodic, relevant and structured training according to needs and circumstances" (INEE Minimum Standards, 2010, pg. 83). Mentors have undergone a Training of Trainers by REP. They observe classrooms to assess and identify teachers' teaching needs and areas in need of improvement. They provide feedback and organize refresher courses for teachers if necessary. Such visits are made twice a month. Then, monthly meetings are organized by SMC network members in each school. SMC network members then discuss the issues and needs of teachers with the REP team. In-service and preservice trainings are then designed and conducted once a year to transfer the required knowledge and skills to teachers.

SMC network members are trained twice a year in school management, school organization, classroom observation, fund raising, purchasing schools' supplies, recruitment and replacing schools' teachers and mentor teachers. The issues addressed are organized based on the issues raised in the monthly meetings.

Within the classrooms, **Teaching and Learning Standard 4 – Assessment of Learning Outcomes** played a role. There is a regular system of monitoring the schools at all grade levels through formative and summative evaluations. Formative assessments include monthly tests, daily homework and classwork and annual examinations at the end of the school year ("Assessment occurs during and at the end of instruction", INEE Minimum Standards, 2010, pg. 89). In accordance with Teaching and Learning Standard 4, Guidance Notes 3 and 4, the REP team ensures that all assessment methods are relevant to the material that was taught and that they are fair, reliable and do not cause stress in the students. The results are then shared with the Education Attaché on a regular basis, paying special attention to the results of 12th grade students because the Afghan Consulate issues certificates to the students who passed final annual examination ("In formal education programmes, assessment is conducted so that learners' achievements and examination results can be recognized by the education authorities. For refugees, efforts should be made to obtain recognition by the education authorities in the country or area of origin," INEE Minimum Standards, 2010, pg. 90).

Challenges

Unstable security in some areas sometimes creates problems for REP staff to pay monitoring visits to three of the schools. The program has not received any funding since September 2010. Therefore, it has been a big challenge for PRDS to pay a salary to the teachers, which has led to a loss of trained teachers and mentors. Newly selected teachers and mentor teachers need training and it is very difficult to arrange training sessions without funding. Schools are raising fees in order to off-set costs, but this is resulting in student dropouts.

Outcomes

On the whole, more than 50,000 students have graduated from REP schools during the last 18 years.

There are 393 Educational Personnel working in all 15 schools.

There are 241 female teachers, including 4 female preschool teachers, and 77 male.

There are 39 mentor teachers, of which 24 are female. Of the 9,258 students, there are 5,891 girls and 3,467 boys.

Lesson Learned

The INEE Minimum Standards Handbook was very useful and by using it, REP has established a strong network in the communities, especially the women. Building safer schools has encouraged more girls to be in school; community participation encourages parents to send their children, especially girls, to school; and the M&E done by the community has allowed them to truly have ownership over their school. Coordinating with MOEs and other stakeholders has allowed us to build good relations and ease the process of repatriation and reintegration. Graduates of REP schools who have repatriated to Afghanistan are working at very good positions with the Government of Afghanistan and NGOs and taking part in the development of Afghanistan. However, sustainability needs to be kept in mind as the program was handed over to PRDS without any funding and without a strategy for sustainability.

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