Proposal Title

Providing Low-Cost and High-Quality Professional Development Training and Mentorship for Female Teachers in Pakistan’s Low-Fee Private Schools

Proposing Organization

The Citizens Foundation

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Proposal Summary

We present the *Dastak* program, a transformative initiative by The Citizens Foundation (TCF) aiming to elevate teaching standards in low-fee private schools across Pakistan. In collaboration with Gul Ahmed Energy, the proposal targets the training and mentorship of 450 teachers, out of which we expect 315 to complete the program, through three cycles from July to December 2023. *Dastak*, meaning “The knock of opportunity” in Urdu, provides a comprehensive and affordable six-week online training to enhance teaching skills, content knowledge, pedagogy, and classroom management.

About TCF

TCF is a school system for out-of-school, underprivileged children in Pakistan, which has the world’s second-largest out-of-school population. With more than 1,833 schools across Pakistan, The Economist has called TCF “[perhaps the largest network of independently run schools in the world](https://www.economist.com/briefing/2018/01/04/pakistan-is-home-to-the-most-frenetic-education-reforms-in-the-world).”

TCF’s vision is to create agents of positive change: well-rounded, motivated, and capable individuals who will not only be able to steer themselves and their families out of poverty but also seek to improve the future of their communities and society at large.

TCF focuses on gender equity using a multi-dimensional approach to improve school access, quality, and infrastructure. It builds schools within walking distance of communities and hires only women as faculty. TCF establishes gender equity in terms of student capacity by ensuring half of its students are girls. TCF is also the largest private employer of women in Pakistan. A case study published by the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative called “The Citizens Foundation: Best Practices in Girls’ Enrollment” has described TCF as:

“essentially a women-centered program. At the front-line of its ongoing interface with the community are female staff and principals. They reach out to mothers and build lasting relationships with them to ensure that they send their daughters to school. These girls, in turn, not only become educated but see their teachers as role models and discover new possibilities for their futures through their exposure to them…. At the heart of the TCF program we can see it is women who are changing the lives of girls in Pakistan.”

Program Need

Pakistan has almost 51 million school-going children with 29 million children attending public schools and 20.4 million children attending private schools. Pakistan’s low-fee private schools[[1]](#footnote-1) have extremely poor quality education and little to zero government regulations. There is no standard or criteria for hiring teachers in these schools and most do not receive any form of formal training. This leads to critical gaps in technical and subject competence and in subpar pedagogical and teaching methodologies. As a result, student learning, engagement, and development deteriorate incrementally.

*Dastak* was piloted in 2019 to reach female teachers in low-fee private schools of Pakistan. The three-phase pilot ended in 2021 with 151 female teachers yielding statistically positive outcomes which were authenticated by a third-party evaluator.

*Dastak* addresses the crisis in professional development of teachers, targeting individuals who are interested in becoming better teachers but do not have access to affordable teacher training and professional development programs. As majority of teachers both worldwide and in Pakistan are women, this program specifically focuses on female teachers (with more than 90% female enrolment).

Project Objectives

The objectives of *Dastak* are:

* To empower teachers who participate as substantially improved teachers, contributing to a better-quality system of learning for their students who are mostly from financially underprivileged backgrounds;
* To provide enhanced content knowledge and skills that teachers need for sustained employment and personal and financial growth; and
* To equip teachers with leadership skills that will help create a better classroom environment.

Project Description

*Dastak* is a 36-hour long online program which spans over a period of six weeks. Each week consists of six hours in class, either two hours per day for three days a week, or three hours per day for two days a week. *Dastak* employs experienced teacher mentors, in order to improve teaching skills, content knowledge, pedagogy, and classroom management, based on TCF’s own experience of training teachers for nearly 30 years in its schools.

The cost for teachers to enroll in the program is PKR 1,000. While the minimum educational criterion for teachers to enroll in the program is matriculation (ten years of schooling), although most participants have completed their higher secondary education (grades 11 and 12). The program is entry-level and can be availed by both school teachers and home tutors.

Mentors come from private and public sectors and are highly competent with years of teaching experience. By ensuring competent mentors, the program enables access to the best resources for mentees.

Over the course of the program, mentees are assessed through speciﬁc graded assignments, reﬂection papers, presentations, and classroom contributions. They receive grades and feedback accordingly. As part of their assignments, they also present a “good teacher” manifesto, highlighting traits of what they think a good teacher looks like.

To graduate, mentees must give a ‘demo lesson,’ in which mentees apply the tools and techniques that they have learned over the course of the six-week program. These topics include: Lesson Planning, Bloom’s Taxonomy, Emotional Intelligence, Classroom Culture, and Self-Management. Mentees are assessed based on their preparedness and readiness to deliver the lesson, quality of lesson delivery, and their body language and demeanor.

After completing 36 hours of the program, mentees become part of the *Seekho aur Sikhao* (Learn and Teach) community, which allows teachers to continue learning, grow, and bring positive change in their classrooms even after completion of the program.

2023–24 Plan

In 2023–24, we are piloting a few new aspects in order to increase enrollment:

* Instead of targeting teachers directly for outreach, we will seek to partner with low-fee private school networks and individual proprietors, to expand the program’s reach.
* Expanding the number of cycles and batches, reaching a broader audience.

Monitoring and Evaluation

*Dastak*’s dedicated program team manages this program, including short-listing mentors and monitoring registration, attendance, and completion of the course. The program is designed for teachers that are self-driven and self-motivated as it is online and expects mentees to maintain good attendance and class participation. Performance and the quality of participation will determine if a certificate is given to a mentee, not just paying the fee. Participation includes completing assignments and participating in group discussions.

Trainers act as mentors for trainees and maintain a checklist for assignments and participation. Completion of the final assignment (demo lesson) at the end of the course is mandatory to pass.

In terms of grading, mentees who fulfill the attendance and performance criteria are certified by TCF. At the end of the session, mentors also guide teachers on career development and help them plan future career paths.

Impact

Mentees of *Dastak* acquire an array of skills which are aimed at enhancing their teaching prowess. These skills encompass:

* **Effective Classroom Management**: Equipping mentees with strategies to create engaging and disciplined classroom environments, essential for effective learning.
* **Lesson Planning and Delivery**: Enabling mentees to craft well-structured lessons that captivate and educate, leading to improved student comprehension.
* **Enhanced Feedback and Assessment Skills**: Empowering mentees to provide constructive feedback and skillful assessments that guide student progress.
* **Diverse Teaching Methods and Aids**: Familiarizing mentees with a diverse toolbox of teaching techniques and aids, enhancing their ability to cater to varying learning styles.
* **Continuous Professional Development**: Nurturing a culture of growth and improvement, fostering a commitment to lifelong learning.

Beneficiaries

From the period of July to December 2023, with Gul Ahmed Energy’s support, *Dastak* will run a total of 3 cycles, enrolling a total of 450 mentees in the program as trainees, with an expected 315 to complete the program at a 70% graduation rate.

Typically, mentees from across Pakistan enroll in the program. Historically, mentees have enrolled from over a hundred cities across all regions and provinces of Pakistan.

Additionally, from a recently conducted survey, we have found that a *Dastak* mentee typically impacts the lives of an average of 100 students across a 3-year teaching lifetime. With this figure in mind, we can estimate that through Gul Ahmed Energy’s support, along with the 315 mentees trained via the program, over 30,000 students will be positively affected by the mentees graduating from *Dastak* over a 3-year teaching period.

Budget

A total of **12.7 million PKR** from Gul Ahmed Energy will fund *Dastak*’s execution from July to December 2023. This comprehensive budget covers program development, content creation, training, mentorship, and team salaries, ensuring a high-quality educational experience. Through this partnership, we aim to enrich teaching and shape a brighter future for countless students in Pakistan.

1. According to data collected in 2020, the low-fee private schools that the program serves charges students an average fee of PKR 700 to 900 per month. The average teacher salary is around PKR 2,500 to 3,000 per month. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)