Project Brief: LLS/Sujag

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| **Date Brief Created:** 12/01/2023 |
| **Project Title:** Literacy and Life Skills for Out-of-School Children in Pakistan’s Remote Areas |
| **Program Name:** *Sujag* |
| **Project Owner Name:** Wajiha Bari |
| **Designation:** General Manager |
| **Department:** Impact Interventions |
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| **Other Department(s) involved:**  -Outcomes  -Supply Chain |
| **Project thematic area:** (Highlight all applicable)   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * 21st Century Skills * Early Childhood Education * Language * Assessment * Capacity Building of Teachers * Multi-Grade Teaching * School Leadership * Scholarships * Higher Education * Transition to Tertiary Education and Employment * Secondary Education * Primary Education * School Construction * New Teaching Methodologies | * Ed-Tech * Curriculum and Textbook Development * Public-Private Partnership * Out-of-School Children * Improving School Management Through Technology * Infrastructure Development * External Evaluation * Community Development * Adult Literacy * Clean Water * Vocational * Nutrition * Impact Beyond TCF | |
| **Priority**:  *-High, Medium, Low (To be determined by EVP)*  High |
| **New Project (Un-budgeted/Part of Existing Opex):**  Part of Existing Opex |
| **Project Need:**  -Why is there an urgent need for the project / what active problem is the project solving. Please cite numbers / studies conducted to determine need where appropriate  Pakistan has the second-largest OOSC population in the world. According to an education ministry document made available to Dawn, Pakistan’s leading newspaper, there are over 28 million children in the country who do not go to a school – higher than previous estimates of 23 million.[[1]](#footnote-1) Of these children, 81% are those who have never attended school and 77% are from rural areas (Faran & Zaidi, 2021). Considering that more than half of OOSC are in the 10-16 age bracket (reasons for children being out of school are listed below), conventional formal schooling may not be the all-encompassing solution that will offer educational opportunities to all children.  According to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM)’s 2019–20 data, the reasons children between the ages of 5 and 16 leave school before completing their primary education vary. Among this group, 36% indicated that a lack of the child’s willingness was the primary reason for discontinuation. Financial constraints were a significant factor, with 15% highlighting the cost as prohibitive. Additionally, 9% mentioned that familial or elder restrictions played a role, while another 9% stated they had to contribute to work obligations. Further, 8% reported domestic responsibilities as a reason, 4% found schools too distant, and 2% perceived the education provided as irrelevant. Interestingly, 17% attributed their departure to various “other reasons.” These trends are even worse for women, reflected in the nation’s literacy rates where women lag behind at 49%, whereas men achieve a higher rate of 70%.[[2]](#footnote-2)  There is also a lack of formal public schools for older children who want to transition or directly enroll in middle and secondary schools, especially in rural areas. There are roughly more than 3 times as many primary schools (150,129)[[3]](#footnote-3) as secondary schools (49,090)[[4]](#footnote-4). Education reforms over the past several decades in Pakistan have focused on primary school-aged children who are between 5 and 9 years old. Through this project, we will be able to address the neglected children from ages of 8 to 16 years.  The LLS/Sujag project is needed as it provides out-of-school children with the essential and basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and life in a short period of time compared to formal schooling or other literacy programs in Pakistan (which notably only cater to adults and not children). According to UNESCO, literacy drives sustainable development, enables greater participation in the labor market, improves child and family health and nutrition, reduces poverty and expands life opportunities, all of which are problems that plague Pakistan today. Target Communities The project is being undertaken in Sindh and Balochistan. The characteristics of the pilot communities are indicative of the rural populations that the program will target at scale. These communities are located in the most remote areas of the province, devoid of basic facilities such as electricity, mobile network, schools, hospitals, and roads.  The majority of people, regardless of age, are illiterate in these communities. There is limited written signage, daily activities like purchase of groceries are done based on packaging, insecticides and fertilizers in agriculture are used based on the instructions of the landowners and medical prescriptions are followed based on verbal instructions and tally marks.  The communities are also insular in nature, which means that while they may be at a walking distance from each other, they usually function as closed communities, with males beyond a certain age not allowed to enter other communities. Similarly, when females reach puberty, they are not allowed to visit other communities unless chaperoned or the visit is need-based.  TCF children come from families that are amongst the poorest in the country. According to a household survey conducted by TCF of TCF school communities, 70% of students’ families receive cash transfers from a national poverty alleviation program. |
| **Type of project:**  *-R&D, Pilot, Redesign, Scale-up, Continuation of Existing Programme*  Pilot |
| **Project’s Theory of Change**  *-Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Outcomes, Impact*  The program will enable out-of-school children to develop agency, awareness and a curiosity to understand the importance of literacy and numeracy, an opportunity they were previously not afforded as they live in sparsely populated communities which keeps them isolated from the world.  At the end of the programme, Sujag graduates will be able to read and fill out application forms such as marriage contracts and bank documents. Graduates will be able to work with large mathematical numbers, enabling them to help with community planning and use digital banking.  Sujag allows these systemically overlooked children to develop skills that are essential to improving their quality of life. These include not just literacy and numeracy but also locally contextualized life skills, relating to livestock, community, health and the environment. After completion of the program, children have many pathways open to them which include transitioning to formal schools, if available, or bettering their existing personal and professional lives with a wider knowledge base and skillset. |
| **Project Description:**  *-What, How*  *-What does the project entail?*  *-What are the objectives, key features, deliver, etc.?*  *Sujag* (meaning Awakening in Sindhi) is an entirely free, non-formal educational intervention designed by The Citizens Foundation (TCF) for out-of-school children living in small, extremely remote, and hard-to-reach communities in Pakistan that do not have access to schools. This fifteen-month-long program provides out-of-school children living in districts of Sindh and Balochistan that have the highest numbers of out-of-school children, with essential skills in their mother tongue of literacy, numeracy, and “life skills” which includes topics such as health, hygiene, environment, human body, and family. The project’s objectives are to build cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal competencies by teaching life, literacy, and numeracy skills, which are all locally contextualized based on the children’s surroundings and learning needs, allowing children to transition from familiar to unfamiliar content and for literacy, numeracy, and life skills to take root through existing community knowledge and artefacts.  **Program Objectives:**   * To build cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies of OOSC by teaching life, literacy and numeracy skills areas which are all locally contextualized based on the children’s surroundings and learning needs, allowing children to transition from familiar to unfamiliar content * For literacy, numeracy, and life skills to take root through existing community knowledge and artefacts   **Key Program Features:**   * Program for out-of-school-children in the 8-16 age bracket. * Offered in local language/mother-tongue of the children. * Three subjects, namely: literacy, numeracy and life skills are offered to children over a fifteen-month-long program, divided into three five-month modules. * The life skills subject is contextualized to the lives of children and offers experiential learning that covers themes that include animals (livestock), community, country, body, health and well-being, environment and plants (crops). * Future pathways could include: transitioning to a formal school, joining a vocational program or continuing with existing professions with better skills.   **Program Activities:**   * **Data Analysis and Needs Identification**   To determine the target population for the programme, the team has used a number of databases such as Pakistan Social & Living Standard Measurement Survey and Pakistan Census Data to arrive at an overall and district-wise number of out-of-school children in Pakistan. After this, districts were ranked based on the number and percentage of out-of-school children and determined as high-need districts.   * **Community Identification**   The community identification on strategy for this programme is the center piece of the implementation strategy. This three step process involves running a marketing campaign, community screening and community assessment. Please see this [visual story](https://view.publitas.com/the-citizens-foundation/sujag-story/page/1) which helps explain this process.  A marketing campaign to spread awareness about the programme, through distributing flyers in-person and WhatsApp messaging, identifying key individuals connected to communities at the grassroots level and leveraging them to reach communities and spreading the word about the programme through existing centers. The marketing message involves a call for action where communities that are interested in starting the LLS programme reach out to our call agent team through SMS.  Once the SMS is received, LLS call agents make contact with the communities through that number. Call agents conduct community identification calls to check if the communities meet the screening criteria. A detailed assessment is carried out and centers are shortlisted for training. The screening includes whether the community has: enough children who want to participate (25 minimum), a teacher who can be trained to conduct the lessons, a community space where the project can be carried out, and a non-functional government school or a functional one which is inaccessible due to distance. Once communities are identified, the LLS team will invite individuals from those communities to a five-day pre-service training.  The advantage of choosing this community identification strategy is that firstly it allows to expand the geographic footprint without deploying an extensive field force. Secondly, considering the hard to reach nature of the communities, a phone-based community assessment strategy makes them accessible and facilitates connection despite the geographic remoteness.   * **Teacher Training**   Potential community teachers need to go through a pre-service training cycle. The pre-service training is a week-long cycle. Teacher trainers are usually past or current Sujag teachers who are qualified enough to conduct teacher trainings. Teacher trainings are usually conducted in person. Training of trainers is conducted via a blended model (online and in-person). The objective of the training is to introduce the Sujag project, invest potential teachers in the vision and goals of the Sujag project, teach them how to use the teacher guides, stories and student workbooks, cover literacy, numeracy, and life skills concepts, and equip teachers with pedagogical skills.  Teachers are hired from the local community. Teachers of the Sujag project are key in the project’s implementation. One of the factors for teachers’ eligibility is they have to have completed secondary education. Trained by Sujag trainers for a period of one week, the role of teachers is to conduct three-hour long lessons five days a week in the community centers, in line with the training provided to them. Teachers are also responsible for gathering and reporting student data. Teachers upload daily attendance and weekly unit progress via the ZOHO app on smartphones which they are required to possess to be eligible to become teachers.   * **Procurement and Distribution**   To facilitate classes at the centers, TCF procures classroom materials such blackboard, sitting mat, students bags and stationery and distributes them to short-listed community centers. Additionally, Teacher Guides, Student Workbooks, Storybooks and Teaching aids are printed and distributed.   * **Community Servicing**   Teachers are required to pre-own a mobile phone with data in order for them to share daily attendance and classroom picture and provide bi-weekly progress updates. Through the phone device, there are plans to share classroom teaching videos with the teachers and thus use it as a motivational and support channel in addition to being a mode of accountability. Using a cell phone for support and accountability practices has facilitated in getting quick feedback from teachers directly at the central office rather than relying on field staff to perform the same function.   * **Evaluation**   Described in detail in the Monitoring and Evaluation section below.  **Program Delivery:**   * Each community center has a maximum of 25 children. * Teachers hired from the community and trained by TCF. Pre- and post-training assessments are conducted to short-list community teachers. * Classroom materials to furnish the community space are provided by TCF (includes floor mats, blackboard, books, stationery items, and school bags) * Teacher’s guides, student workbooks and stories are designed and printed by TCF and provided to the community. * Attendance and unit progress is shared by teachers through the ZOHO app. Class room pictures and videos are shared on WhatsApp. Surprise and planned classroom observations are conducted of community classes.   Currently, the materials have been developed in two languages, Sindhi and Urdu. |
| **Project Deliverables:**  *-Specific measurable end results that you're aiming to produce at specific points during your project*   * The overall outcomes of the project are that children will be able to use literacy, numeracy and life skills to make informed decisions in their everyday life by the end of the program. Literacy outcomes include basic composition, reading and comprehension skills that enable them to read the newspaper, prescriptions and signs, and to fill out documents. Numeracy outcomes include being able to read and write the time, solving real life problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, area, perimeter, decimals and fractions. Life skills outcomes are critical thinking skills, curiosity, and a sense of individual and collective agency. Participants will also learn to reflect on power structures and understand their place in the world at large.   Future pathways for children could be enrolling in a school or learning a vocation. The main idea is to equip children with the skills of literacy, numeracy, and general “life” skills which will help them make better and informed decisions in all fields of one’s life.  While research tells us that children who enroll in non-formal education programs, such as this one, mainstream into formal schools, we have made an informed decision to not set any targets around this due to the lack of supply of formal schools in these areas: there are only 10 secondary schools for every 100 primary schools in Sindh. So while we certainly aim to facilitate transitions to formal schooling, we remain dedicated to providing education to the most educationally and socio-economically deprived areas where this may or may not be a possibility. |
| **Project Timeline:**  *Breakdown of activities and realistically scheduled timeline. Is timeline flexible? Is it dependent on grant funding? If not flexible, then how soon do we need funds?)*  *-Please note that grants take up to one year before funds disbursal*  We need funds as soon as possible. |
| **Project Findings:**  Cohort 1 (Based on 10-month findings)   * Of the 112 children assessed at the baseline level for Sindhi literacy, 69% did not know how to read letters, 31% could read letters and 2% could read words. After the 10-month period, of the 79 students assessed, only 11% could not read letters, 89% could read letters, 45% could read words, 18% could read sentences and 13% could read stories. Learning outcomes of students in literacy (Sindhi). * Of the 112 children assessed at baseline level for Numeracy, 62% could not read numbers at all, 39% could read numbers from 1 to 9 and 3% could read from 10 to 99 and none of them could perform subtraction and division. After the 10-month period, of the 79 students assessed, only 8% students couldn’t read numbers, 92% could read numbers from 1 to 9. Additionally, 47% could solve subtraction and 38% could solve division questions.   Cohort 2 (Based on 5-month findings)   * Of the 140 students assessed at the baseline for Sindhi literacy, 93% did not know how to read letters, only 7% could read letters, 3% words and 2% sentences. After the 5-month period, 83 students were assessed, 65% could read letters, 14% words, 10% sentences and 6% stories. * Of the 140 students assessed at the baseline for Numeracy, 86% did not know how to read numbers (1-9), 15% could read numbers from 1-9 and 1% from 10-99. After the 5-month period, of the 83 students assessed, 19% did not know how to read numbers, 81% could read numbers from 1-9, 28% from 10 to 99 and 21% from 100 to 200, 15% could solve subtraction and 10% could solve division questions.   Cohort 3 (Based on 5-month findings)   * Of the 340 students assessed at the baseline for Sindhi literacy, 49% did not know how to read letters, 51% could read letters, 5% could read words, 2% could read sentences and 1% could read a story. After the 5-month period, of the 285 students assessed, only 1% did not know how to read letters, 99% could read letters, 73% could read words, 39% could read sentences, and 23% could read stories. * Of the 340 students assessed at the baseline for numeracy, 2% could not read numbers (1-9), 98% could read numbers from 1-9, 50% from 10-99 and 11% from 100-200. After the 5-month period, of the 285 students assessed, 97% students could read numbers 1-9, 58% from 10-99 and 45% from 100-200, 42% could solve subtraction and 11% could solve division questions.   Qualitative evaluation was conducted in the first year of operations on a sample basis (40% of the centers enrolled). Findings from external qualitative evaluation, which primarily looked at the life skills component, are as follows:   * Cohort 1 (10-month findings)   There is uneven improvement in life skills component: cognitive skills as reflected by use of logic, improved across all centers, improvement in transferability skills was seen in 4 out 5 centers, and that in creativity was seen in 1 center only. Communication skills improved in 4 out 5 centers. The qualitative study highlights need to explore the reasons why certain centers have shown more improvement versus others.   * Cohort 2 (5-month findings)   Similar to Cohort 1, uneven improvement was seen in improvement in life skills component with students from some centers showing improvement in cognitive and communication skills and those from others not showing any improvement. |
| **Monitoring and Evaluation:**  -How is the project monitored and evaluated? How will the project be monitored and evaluated?  The programme is spread across three modules with learning outcomes for each module. We monitor the Annual Status of Education Survey (ASER) tool as both baseline and endline assessment as a tool to measure outcomes of student learning which is done on 100% of the centers (approximately 300+ centers). The results are currently being compiled.  Student attendance is uploaded daily by teachers via ZOHO forms through teachers’ mobile phones. ZOHO forms are used as a one-stop tool for collecting all information related to attendance and unit progress. Teachers report attendance daily and progress on class content by unit weekly. Pictures with defined guidelines of the lessons being conducted are required to be uploaded by teachers daily. These picture guidelines include visibility of center ID written on the board, date written on the board, and most of the students.  Centers can view their daily performance with the help of a live sheet which is automatically updated every five minutes. Moreover, salary is not processed for centers which have submitted less than or equal to 85% monthly attendance.  Surprise and planned observations are also conducted during lessons in the community centers to ensure all processes are being observed. Observers fill out a classroom observation form during these visits.  There is also regulated WhatsApp interaction where teachers’ names are saved with their IDs where they share live coverage of the activities and details of the class being conducted on a daily basis. So far the maximum response time during working hours is 15 minutes and the maximum response time post-working hours is 45 minutes. Response templates for FAQs reduce response time and include attendance and unit progress related queries, and ZOHO app-related queries.  In terms of pedagogy, focus groups are conducted during teacher trainings which are useful in ensuring teachers’ understanding of the modules and the project’s processes. During the training of teachers, teachers are required to demonstrate classroom lessons to ensure teaching capacity and feedback is given for improvements. |
| **Project Risks and Mitigation:**  *-What are the risks associated? What is the plan to mitigate them?*  **Risks associated and mitigation strategies:**  To mitigate the risk of **natural calamities**, the modules have been restructured. Earlier 1 module was taught for 8 months, now it has been restructured to 5 months. For 5 months each, 2 modules will be taught and then there will be a natural break in the programme because there is a risk of flooding in Sindh during the monsoon season which is August and September.  To mitigate the risk of **student dropout**, the project’s timeline has been set to be continuous in nature, with no gaps between the three modules. This encourages participants to complete the program and not drop out between modules. A module completion certificate is given at the end of each module. To mitigate the risk of students dropping out to pursue employment or housework, the daily lessons have been designed to be short: only 3 hours per day.  To address the risk of **teacher turnover**, teachers will be hired from within walking distance of the centers and trainings will happen within the community. More teachers will be trained than required, to prevent disruption in case teachers drop out.  To mitigate the risk of **community resistance**, norms and sensitivities of the communities have been observed and studied and incorporated in the design of the program. For instance, location of community centers, training and hiring of community teachers and development of teaching and learning materials is sensitized to the needs of the community. |
| **Sustainability:**  Other solutions to OOSC literacy includes programs of JICA or Literate Pakistan Foundation which are designed for more experienced teachers and offered in Urdu only. Sujag/LLS’ sustainability is credited to the fact that it is conducted in the native language/mother tongue of the communities and the lessons are relevant to their environment. These programs also are not available like Sujag/LLS: in the most remote, hard-to-reach rural areas. |
| **Scalability and Replicability:**  Sujag/LLS started off with 12 community centers in Sindh in 2020, and as of June 2023 has 284 active centers in Sindh. This shows that the program has immense success of replicability.  Currently, the project is being conducted in Sindhi, which is the mother tongue of the areas we are operating in Sindh. However, we want to incorporate other provincial languages as well in order to scale to other provinces of the country. This will be an added cost and time investment.  Lastly, as the project scales, some program design elements may change to better support scale. |
| **Future Plans:**  TCF will continue to operate the centers in response to demand. We expect that most centers will remain open as new cohorts of children age and require an education solution. Previously, new cohorts were enrolled in bi annual cycles. In the coming financial year, we are planning for a quarterly induction. Like TCF’s schooling system and the non-formal female adult literacy centers that are opened around them, TCF is dedicated to sustaining and scaling the program in response to need and thanks to its broad base of supporters. In the next seven years, according to TCF’s vision of 2030, the program should have close to a million learners. |
| **Project Budget\*:**  *-Add more cells if you want to show it year-wise or if you want to add more expense heads*  *-Please get project budget approved by finance before submitting*   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Expense Head** | **Amount (PKR)** | **Assumptions** | | Materials | 100,151,940 |  | | Program Staff Salaries | 9,360,000 |  | | Training | 11,312,693 |  | | Monitoring | 3,205,263 |  | | Project Evaluation | 4,712,322 |  | | Head Office Expenses | 1,995,368 |  | | **Total** | **130,737,586** |  |   \*Detailed budget to be provided at the time of proposal depending on grantor’s requirement |
| How much of this is already funded? (add more cells if required) \*   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Donor 1-FSZ (Restricted to Materials and Program Staff Salaries)** | **Donor 2- SSDF (Unrestricted to the program)** | **Unfunded** | | Materials | 23,845,700 | 24,007,500 |  | | Program Staff Salaries | 8,880,000 |  | | Training |  |  | | Monitoring |  |  | | Project Evaluation |  |  | | Head Office Expenses |  |  | | **Total** | **32,725,700** | **24,007,500** | **56,733,200** |   SSDF: $450,000 (3 Years; the current year 2023-24 is the last year of their funding)  *Fondazione San Zeno* (120,000 Euros in 2023-24; 150,000 Euros in 2024-25; 150,000 Euros in 2025-26)  For FSZ, using the exchange rate of 1 EUR = 316 PKR  For SSDF, using the exchange rate of 1 USD = 160.05  \*To be filled in consultation with Global Partnerships team |
| **Project owner(s) for sign off**:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Name | **Department** | **Designation** | **Approval status** | | Shazia Kamal | Outcomes | Head of Outcomes | Approved | | Wajiha Bari | Impact Interventions | General Manager | Approved | | Unaiza Ayub | Supply Chain | General Manager |  | |

1. Abbasi, K. (2023, October 17). *Despite lofty claims, out-of-school children soar to over 28 million*. DAWN.COM. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1781436> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is for the population of 10 years and older. Source: Government of Pakistan Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives. (n.d.). (rep.). *Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2019-20*, 12, 48–49. Retrieved January 8, 2024, from <https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//pslm/publications/pslm_district_2019-20/PSLM_2019_20_District_Level.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. National Education Management Information System Academy of Educational Planning and Management Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Government of Pakistan Islamabad. (n.d.). (rep.). *Pakistan Education Statistics 2016 -17,* 8. Retrieved January 8, 2024, from <http://library.aepam.edu.pk/Books/Pakistan%20Education%20Statistics%202016-17.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)