USAID Sindh Reading Program

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CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON LIBRARIES DEVELOPMENT

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SRP's Library Development Philosophy

As part of a larger initiative managed by Sindh Reading Program (SRP), one of its explicit strategic objectives has been to identify innovative ways to attract children and young people to reading in communal spacesand facilitate their cognitive development through the potent medium of libraries. To this end, SRP has taken on the challenge of upgrading 110 multi-campus school libraries, school reading spaces, and ten public libraries. These efforts are expected to promote reading, establish information access points and support academic success of children of all ages. SRP also aims to initiate and build the momentum of upscaling libraries in Sindh to global standards. Our envisaged model libraries will serve as social touchpoints, offering young readers more than just books.

CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON LIBRARIES DEVELOPMENT:
Objectives and Participants

Led by SRP's technical team and an international expert on libraries development, Rob Davies, the approach and objectives of the workshop were:

- To introduce participants to the state-of-the-art global practices for the management and maintenance of in-school and public libraries.
- To start a dialogue about the key challenges faced by stakeholders in the development of libraries.
- To collaborate on key solutions to overcome these challenges.

This is the first of series of workshops that will continue to challenge current stakeholders to think critically about their approach to libraries development.

The workshops under the Library Development Component will also be used as a conduit to provide feedback to SRP on the district level challenges in ensuring high quality library development and support.

The workshop participants included nominees from the Department of Education, Municipal Government, Ministry of Culture, government school teachers and members from local NGOs such as Zindagi Trust, Al- Ansar Trust, Lyari Community Development Project and Charter for

Compassion.

Key Findings of the Workshop

1- There is no mediating body between the various government departments that oversees public libraries. In addition there is no communication between public library stakeholders and the education department – who govern in-school libraries.

2- The Ministry of Culture is expanding its network of libraries in Sindh under two basic criteria: a) a functioning building b) No objection from the current governing body

3- Liaquat National Library is experimenting with open access to library books in certain sections, as well as creating a central online catalogue for all culture ministry libraries.

4- The global vision for libraries adheres to the concept of a multi-functional space that engages community members across the spectrum. This approach can be implemented in the cultural complexes being created by the culture ministry.

5- Pakistan Libraries Association is providing free library automation services in Sindh which they can extend to willing partners.

6- There is a dire need to increase library budgets as well as trained library staff.

7- Advocacy is required to implement the necessary changes in library development.

Key Takeaways from the Workshop

- Platforms must be created for stakeholder bodies to collaborate on libraries. This should include the Ministry of Culture, Municipal Government and the Education Department, along with private and NGO stakeholders. SRP will initiate provincial level convening of stakeholders to address this.
- The Ministry of Culture must create a mechanism to interconnect their library network. SRP will support the ongoing effort of Director Bashir Abro in appointing a libraries directorate through face to face consultation with the Ministry of Culture.
- Liaquat National Library is experimenting with open access to library books in certain sections as well as creating a central online catalogue for all culture ministry libraries. This library can be a model to adopt in other libraries in Sindh. Nominees for this library can be appointed as members of the SRP working group on libraries.
- The global vision for libraries can be implemented in the cultural complexes being created by the culture ministry as these spaces contain appropriate infrastructure. SRP should engage the Culture Ministry on this. In addition SRP must introduce librarian staff training to increase library efficacy.
- Pakistan Libraries Association must be invited to the SRP working group to increase cataloguing efficiency through automated library catalogues.
- Head teachers and District Education Officials will be sensitized to in-school library development and management as well as integration with curriculum through SRP face to face orientation with library informational manuals and district level meetings with the relevant officials.
- Strategies must be utilized to increase interest in library spaces. These could include giving ownership of library spaces to community groups, youth groups, children's corners for early readers and weekend timings for adults.
- SRP will advocate for Library standards to be increased by creating a benchmark document for all stakeholders to strive towards and to be introduced into formal policy on library development.

1- The workshop participants suggested that a working group on libraries development must be established. This will be established in the coming weeks.

2- Nominees from the culture ministry and the Pakistan libraries association (PLA) have expressed interest in collaborating with SRP on libraries development. Possible avenues include:

      i.   Policy push at the culture ministry to appoint a libraries directorate for smooth management of the growing network of culture ministry libraries.

     ii.   PLA providing free of cost library automation services to individual and library networks in Sindh.

Way Forward