

Recommendations from NEP Consultation Session Baluchistan: Quetta and Lasbela

Early Childhood Education

The Baluchistan Education Sector Plan 2013- 2017 states that in the ECE area, the government will (1) *Increase acceptance of the concept within the education sector,*(2) *institutionalize ECE policy framework for sustainability and* (3) *expand ECE beyond the current small number of schools.* It further links child health and nutrition to the ECE framework.

Despite this commitment, Baluchistan has not seen the kind of improvements one would expect. As a result, during the consultation session in Quetta, the following recommendations were made:

- The number of ECE schools needs to significantly increase. ECE classroom can be installed in existing primary schools rather than wait for new ECE specific schools to be set up.
- All ECE school must also be fully equipped with learning materials and teaching kits.
- Age of ECE students should be 3-5
- Media can be used to create awareness regarding the benefits of ECE in communities and especially amongst mothers. A door to door campaign would also be useful. Furthermore, there should be coordination between teachers, parents, and the community for improving access and creating awareness
- All ECE teachers must be qualified and have the training to successfully address the challenges of early childhood learning.

Primary Education

The provincial education sector plan of Baluchistan endorses: “(1) *Child friendly school designs should be developed in consultations with educationists for all future constructions.* (2) *Develop separate but linked approaches to teaching and learning for primary, middle and secondary education.* (3) *Minimize impact of multi-grade teaching in primary schools.* (4) *Minimize impact of multi-grade teaching through teacher training and material development.* (5) *Reduce the number of single room and two room primary schools.* (6) *Vertical Expansion through up-gradation of primary and middle school to middle and high school respectively.* (7) *Increase in number of classrooms in primary school.* (8) *Increase number of 5 room primary schools.* (9) *One school meal at the primary level with eventual expansion to middle and higher levels.*”

Once again, ASER data shows that the desired enrollment rates were not achieved. Through group discussions, the following recommendations were gathered:

- Minimum qualification for any teacher hired should be masters.
- Till multi-grade teaching can be eliminated, teachers must be given the proper training to deal with the challenges of instructing pupils with different ages, grades and abilities at the same time.
- Method of teaching should be more activity based and creative so as to eliminate the culture of rote learning and instill in students a passion for learning.
- Counseling for students should be made available at primary level as well, so students are aware of all the many career paths they can chose in the future. Activities such as Career Days where parents come and talk about their professions should be introduced as well.
- Student health and wellness should be given importance as well

Secondary Education

With regards to secondary education, Baluchistan Education Sector Plan 2013-2017 highlights: “(1) *Develop separate but linked approaches to teaching and learning for primary, middle and secondary education.* (2) *Functional laboratories should be provided in all secondary schools that include funds for replenishment and technical expertise.* (3) *Revise language courses at secondary and higher secondary levels to shift away from literature heavy content.* (4) *Develop of optional courses in local languages at the middle and secondary level.* (5) *Remove school availability bottlenecks at middle and secondary level.*”

There are still huge gaps in provision of secondary school facilities and learning outcomes continue to remain a major challenge as illustrated by ASER data. Through group discussions, the following recommendations were gathered:

- All teachers must be subject specialists only. Teachers must also be IT literate so they can ensure students are well equipped to function in a tech driven world.
- Students must have access to fully stocked and functional labs and other facilities. Greater funds must be released to ensure access to learning facilities.
- Trained and certified career counselors should be present on all campuses.
- Life skills based education should be made part of the curriculum.
- The numbers of secondary schools need to increase so as to accommodate the large number of incoming primary level students.

Non Formal Education

The 2013-2017 Baluchistan Education Sector Plan states that “*Institutionalization of Youth/Adult literacy (YAL) and Non-Formal Basic Education (NFBE) Programs in the Province to the mainstream of education system of the province*”. It further identifies 4 strategies “(1) *Develop a policy framework for literacy and NFE sector at the provincial level* (2) *Greater focus on adolescent and youth literacy* (3) *Improve on the current teaching learning material on literacy* (4) *Capacity development to undertake literacy and NFE programs.*(5) *Retrieve and mainstream dropped out children through improving the effectiveness of non-formal education.*”

Despite these commitments, literacy and learning levels are consistently low and the numbers of literacy programs in the province are not high enough. The following recommendations were gathered during the consultation session in Quetta:

- A national target should be set for the literacy rate to be achieved and subsequent steps should be taken to ensure that the targets are met.
- There is a need to educate the masses regarding NFE opportunities as well as to allocate a greater proportion of the budget to this education sub-sector.
- Tailored curriculum and training modules should be developed, keeping in mind the local culture, norms, and markets etc. e.g. fishery, agriculture, carpentry and so on.
- To make NFE more accessible, government schools should be used as NFE centers after hours.
- A formal body should be introduced who can ensure proper coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and information dissemination.

Governance and Financing for Education

The Baluchistan Compulsory Education Act passed in 2014 is an act “*to provide free and compulsory Education in the province of Baluchistan*”. Data shows that issues of access and quality continue to remain problematic for Baluchistan, as the numbers of enrollments remain low and the dropout rates continue to remain high. Youth, teachers, government officials, and civil society members in attendance made the following policy recommendations to address issues of governance:

- Increase the percent of GDP allocated to the education sector. In particular, there is a need to allocate resources for upgrading existing schools and setting up new ones, as well as ensuring that children enrolled in schools have access to reading/writing materials.
- Budget allocation need to be more transparent so as to make monitoring and evaluation easier.
- The government should ensure the presence of master trainers who can further train teachers so they are fully equipped to teach in a creative and effective manner.
- The communities should be involved through SMCs in the budget allocation process.
- Third party monitoring and audits should be introduced as a monitoring mechanism. Furthermore, bi-annual or annual expenditure reports should be submitted to the secretary education, higher authorities, and the public at large.

- A performance based pay system should be introduced for education administrators. The better their schools perform, the higher their salaries should be.
- The government must introduce and enforce minimum standards for the education sector.

Madrassas

The NEP 2009 acknowledges that Deeni Madrassas form a component of the private sector, and that this parallel system consists of a curriculum that lies outside the mainstream. The discussion in Baluchistan focused on how madrassas can be mainstreamed. The following recommendations were gathered:

- Along with religious studies, madrassas should also be giving students skills trainings.
- The government should set an employment quota for madrass students, to help them with employment after they have graduate.
- All schools and madrassas should agree to teach a similar syllabus all across the board. The curriculum should be revised in a way that will allow madrassas to play a role in increasing literacy e.g. along with Quranic lessons, also teach math science, English, ICTs with life skills etc.
- Madrassas should undergo the same monitoring that other public schools undergo i.e. surprise visits etc.