

ITA Profile:

Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) or the “Center of Education and Consciousness” Public Trust, a certified and tax-exempt body registered with the Punjab Charity Commission was established in 2000. It was set up as a response to the profound crisis of education forming the nuts and bolts of the Education Emergency in Pakistan. ITA was born out of a growing realization that the most critical of human entitlements, the right to learn with understanding is critical for lifelong learning, knowledge systems and citizenship skills, in a nation with 9,000 years of living heritage for ALL citizens of Pakistan.

Vision

“To promote education as a comprehensive process¹ for human and social transformation”

ITA is committed to evidence-based implementation through a sector wide inclusive, rights based and gender sensitive lifelong learning approach. The programs range from: Early Childhood Development-ECD (2-8); whole school improvement (5-16); non-formal catch up and Second Chance programs (4-15) to technical vocational (15-30); college and tertiary level (17+) embedded in life skills, health hygiene, environmental responsibility, learning for understanding. Programs operate within geographical clusters through seamless linkages across all age groups for sustainable development and well-being.

Currently Pakistan has the world’s second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school; for ECE 40% children are enrolled through a mainstream policy of enrolment in public and private schools; however, the quality remains a big challenge in terms of active engagement in all sub-domains of readiness for SDG 4.2.1. In the 5-9 age group, 5 million children are not enrolled in schools, the remainder are in the post primary age group; the bigger challenge is a supply side one with shortage of facilities and adequate well-prepared workforce. Timely and strong holistic and foundational investment in ECCE is essential for persistence/transition to primary grades and beyond, but also lifelong learning with gender equity.

To address the ongoing education emergency and development needs, ITA has engaged concurrently in three key areas since 2000: a) evidence based bespoke service delivery ECCE to Secondary/TEVT with life skills, b) capacity building for workforce (teachers/headteachers/assistants), community/parents and caregivers, duty bearers/ decision makers in education departments/CSOs and volunteer/activists downstream partners and c) research and evidence on learning /systems challenges and targeted advocacy. ITA engages with ECCE both in normal and disrupted emergency contexts where often ECCE is the first area of action supporting children and caregivers/mothers to stabilize learning and nurturing care needs in disruptive/displaced spaces. To achieve the national education development needs our vision and goals are directly linked to the ambitions of Article 25A a Fundamental and Constitutional Right to Education for ALL children aged 3/5-16 (RTE acts in Punjab/Sindh/ICT include ECCE too Article 9/10) To achieve this goal ITA works inclusively and closely with: mainstream departments/ministry of federal education & professional development, all national/provincial education and ECE policies;

¹ “Comprehensive process” means from Early Years/ECCE, primary, secondary, tertiary and lifelong learning including, TVET, NFE with life skills and social emotional learning; the latter are often triggers for solid cognitive learning and help stabilize at scale disruptive challenges

Pakistan National Curriculum and provincial Curriculum and ECE curricula; National /Provincial Learning and ECE Standards in Pakistan, which in turn are aligned with the global Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and in particular- SDG 4 works in tandem with SDG 1 (Poverty) SDG 2 and 3 (Nutrition & Health); SDG 5 (Gender Equality) SDG 9 (Decent Work/livelihoods), SDG 13 (climate change) and SDG 17 (Partnerships). ITA is actively engaged in life skills and programs to end violence against women and children and early/forced child marriages.

ITA ECCE Scope of Work (2000-2022)

Since 2000 ITA has been anchored in ECCE, for foundational learning making its mark from Lahore in 2000 when ITA began a two year ECCE program in a partnership with Dept of Education Punjab in a government school. Its leadership serving as the Technical Adviser to MoE concurrently influenced the federal Education Sector Reforms (ESR) action plan 2001-2004/5 to initiate the innovative nationwide ECE program in government schools across all provinces and areas with federal grants. The ESR Action Plan 2001-2005 was crafted to implement the policy provision for ECE as reflected in the National Education Policy (NEP) 1998 committed to its proper implementation cognizant that almost 30% children enrolled in primary schools are in ECE/Katchi grade but never supported systematically through well prepared teachers trained in the art and science of early years and its age-appropriate domains.

ITA has been not just an active implementer, capacity builder and researcher of ECCE within the mainstream discourse but also an innovator and actor at the local, national and global level. The Katchi class at best remains a very poor manifestation of ECE and public schools often have concurrent classes called "Nursery/ Kindergarten/ECE" etc. Often ECE grade/classroom is the better provisioned program in a school, whilst nursery/katchi classes operate in the same school as marginalized and unsupported classes in terms of personnel and facilities, leading to inequality even within the same school for pre-school enrolled children. In Sindh, until recently, katchi students were not even considered officially enrolled without provision of a General Registration (GR) number to the child! Mercifully, these regressive trends are being reversed after two decades of investment in ECCE which is now well reflected in the education sector plans of all provinces, policies, curriculum and financing/budgets, albeit the latter remain low. In Sindh a formal cadre for Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) BPS 15 has also been approved with recruitment well in place, aligned to its 25-A Act/RTE 2013 and Rules of Business. In Punjab, however, teachers from the primary cadre are seconded on rotation to ECE grades whilst in some districts Teaching Assistants (TA) may be hired from the local community often paid from the NSB (Non-Salary Budgets) available with the School Councils at the school level.

Parents often enroll children at the right age in pre-school program with aspirations of school readiness to be built, knowing well that well equipped child friendly spaces may not be present. Data on ECE enrolment trends reveals there are often low or no gaps between girls and boys but these begin to appear when the children are not supported and unable to transition from one grade to another. Often, teachers in charge whimsically retain children year after year in the same pre -school grades without learning much thus failing to attract and retain interest of children and/or parents. These children often become the forgotten marginalized groups, putting a dent on the original ambitions of parents/ guardians for 'school readiness'.

ITA is also member of provincial, national and global networks of ECCE (ARNEC, USAID, Early Learning Partnership/ELP Systems). ITA's senior program lead has been awarded and completed a GEM Report (UNESCO) Fellowship in ECE.

ITA has made remarkable contributions in the areas of influencing policy at provincial and national level, teachers' professional development programs, and emergencies, Teaching Learning Material (TLMs) curriculum development, assessment systems for ECCE, advocacy and research. ITA is acknowledged by the public sector partners within different forums. It is also a Friend/member of ARNEC and ECCE networks in Pakistan and the region.

For ECCE SNC in 2021 ITA formally shared a technical note with the National Curriculum Council/MofE&PT on the draft SNC for ECCE. ²

² https://itacec.org/document/2021/8/ECCE_in_Single_National_Curriculum.pdf

ITA Expertise in ECCE 2000-2022

Service Delivery Categories	Material Development & /innovations	Capacity Building /Innovations	Research/ Innovations	Pol
2000-2022	A large corpus of ECCE materials developed	With UNILEVER translated National ECE Curriculum 2007 in Urdu and distributed 10,000 copies with 500 teachers trained	ECCE – 2000-2022 Worked as Chairperson on Task force by Unesco Institute of Statistics on SDG 4.2.1	Eng for
Partner Government Schools in Punjab, ICT and Sindh	Classroom spaces – equipped, furniture, visual and print rich walls, learning materials, Pehla Taleemi Basta (adapted from TRC) and digital learning /computers	Teachers /Head Teachers AEOs/Field Teams Assistants/ Para - Teachers Parents & Caregivers Volunteers/activists	Individualized Education Portfolios for ECCE students – that also acted as evidence for students when shifting schools (esp. in emergencies).	ESR 200 NE Sindh Sindh Rul Pur Rul
PEF/PEIMA/SEF schools	Learning Corners for maths, language, homes a and the world around us	Cluster based training and School based training and support (ECE needs latter all the time)	Adapted/Aligned research/ assessment tools MELQO –with MODEL and MELE in collaboration with the World Bank in Pakistan The same tools were adopted for M&E by PMIU/SED as an APP where AEOs were trained	Cur Pur Lea Tea Wo Sindh Tec SNC
Emergencies (2005, 2009, 2011-2017/18, 2020-22 with innovations With Industry partner UNILEVER reached out to 50 schools during 2011/12 emergencies rich schools supporting	ECE Manuals B.Ed Course – 10 modules 1. Introduction to Early Childhood Education 2. Child Development 3. Early Child Care	Interactive digital materials, Phonic based approaches,	Undertook longitudinal study in Punjab on telephonic surveys during COVID with Univ. of Durham.	ECE ECE Pre Hos Cor

schools in need for equipment and furniture.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Designing an Early Years Learning Environment 5. Children’s Literature 6. Young Children’s Art and Drama 7. Assessment 8. Understanding Children’s Social Development & Behavior 9. ICT in Children’s Learning <p>Translation of Play Based Parental modules Create Catt; (0-60 months in Urdu (ICPs) adapted from Disability in emergencies -</p>	DRR – and ECE/ Primary Parental modules adapted from 0-60 months	For ELP in Punjab and Sindh Surveys during COVID developed an app for enumerators for the surveys	the Dec Sub Eng ELP SED
Child Labor and its worst forms	Spaces and Equipment: Play areas in Schools, Parks, Camps, Sanjah Verahs, Regular Classrooms,	IEPs training Participatory Monitoring Community	Held qualitative work on Focused Group Discussions with parents and teachers – Policy Briefs written and Papers presented in Pakistan and International conferences	

Partners with whom ITA has worked on ECCE:

Development Partners: UNICEF, Save the Children, US Dept of Labor, Dubai Cares, World Bank, FCDO, UNESCO Institute of Statisticx

Industry Partners: Brand /Surf Excel UNILEVER “Dirt is Good”; Bulleh Shah Packages/Store Enso,

Government: PEF/PEIMA, SEF, SELD

Academia/Think Tanks: Cambridge University, Durham University, GEM Report, ARNEC

Service Delivery

- ITA started Early Childhood Care & Development services since 2000; ECE was expanded during the emergency response programs after the earthquake in AJK in 2005 for vulnerable children aged 5 years and below for their early recovery and rehabilitation through engagement in early learning activities/safe spaces (more than 500 locations/schools in Muzaffarabad and Bagh districts). ITA also worked with IDPs from Swat in Swabi in 2009/10. ITA mobilized UNILEVER for play equipment in displaced persons camps. Both AJK/Swabi camps engaged parents/ mothers very closely for trauma management of 'mothers and children' together
- Comprehensive innovations include the establishment of 16 ECCE Day care centers or Sanjha Vehras (our courtyards) in the flood affected districts of Punjab and Sindh in 2010/12 by linking ECCE component with health/LHWs, nutrition, parental care, life skills and livelihoods for young mothers and older siblings.
- Under the Dubai Cares Project phase III from 2014 to 2018; ITA developed 450 ECE/Katchi Centers in 3 districts of Sindh including Sukkur, Shikarpur and Karachi along with Balochistan (100) and Punjab (150) with an objective to "Improving learning outcomes, enrolment and transitions from ECE to primary education for especially girls and vulnerable groups in Pakistan". These ECE Centers were equipped with ECE Reading Kits including 200 plus books, ECE Learning Material Kit, ECE Furniture and Teacher Training and Professional Development under capacity building of teachers and field staff. This project implementation is also well acknowledged by the govt of Sindh/Punjab.
- Under another Component of Dubai Cares Project; "Learning for Access (L4A)" accelerated learning centers were established to provide access and accelerated learning opportunities to Out of School Children (OOSC) and support for school improvement.

Teacher Training, Capacity Building and Professional Development

- Printing and nationwide dissemination of National Curriculum 2007 in Urdu and English across Pakistan with CSR UNILEVER Support.
- Implementation of National Early Childhood Curriculum via developing syllabus, scheme of work and lesson plans in Sindh and Punjab
- Offering Capacity Building Programs such as Continuous Professional Development /Diploma Programs for ECE teachers & managers - several manuals and guides of ECCE have been produced by ITA for its teachers /assistants in varied geographies of Pakistan.
- Initiation of One –Year Pre-Service Teachers' Training Program (B Ed. ECE) in 2013 to prepare well-trained ECE teachers.
 - A set of 10 manuals was developed in collaboration with VMIE (VM Institute for Education)
 - A shorter version of 10 weeks duration has also been developed on the same topics for a modular approach for teachers needing a faster approach
- Offering Teachers Training and Professional Development Trainings/Crash Courses to improve whole Early Childhood Care and Development experience of young children by educating and engaging ECCE teaches, caregivers and practitioners on prominent topics includes Playful Practices and Child Engagement, Art of Storytelling, Executive Function, Social and Emotional Learning Wellbeing, use of low-cost/no-cost material in ECCE Classroom and home.

Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) Development /Assessment and Dissemination

- **ECE Kit (Urdu & Sindhi):** Inspired by TRC"s Pehla Taleemi Basta, the ECE kit in more robust materials is one of the main learning materials of ITA, developed in Urdu. A Sindhi version

along with a teacher guide was developed for the schools in Sindh under NRSP and Dubai Cares project

- **Individualized Education/ Child Profile (ICP) & Flash Cards:** ICPs have been developed in Urdu (and Sindhi) for child assessment in all development domains; cognitive, emotional, social & personal and language

Policy Advocacy

- Policy Dialogues at Provincial, National and International levels – e.g. Karachi Consensus Statement on ECE held in September 2014 - Right to Education and ASER Pakistan under Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) organized a two day South Asian Right to Education & ECED meeting in Karachi in collaboration with the Education & Literacy Department (E&LD) Government of Sindh for the purpose of bringing forward the need to address the challenges of ECED
- In 2015, ITA was selected as a Learning Champion under the auspices of the Learning Metrics Task Force 2.0 (convened by UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Brookings Institution), and in this role coordinated government agencies in four provinces to showcase best practices on assessment for early childhood and primary school assessment at international forum
- Engaged in the tracing of SDG 4.2.1 - ITA's leadership served as the Chair of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML) Task Force SDG 4.2 convened by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)
- ELP Systems Research Policy Dialogue was held in January 2022 with key stakeholders of Sindh including members of SELD. ELP Brief provided a situation analysis and learning levels of Early Childhood Education in Sindh during COVID-19 School closure.

Community Involvement and Parental Engagement

- Engagement of teachers, mothers and caregivers through an interactive activity-based manual of "Playful Parenting" in partnership of ARNEC & CreateCatt; which focuses on implementation of Developmental Play Model and Social & Emotional wellbeing of young children.
- Due to COVID-19 pandemic & school closure; ITA started the initiative of Sanjha Vehra (The Courtyard Learning) in communities to engage OOSC and dislocated students in outdoor sessions open for all children to educate them on Covid-19 SOPs and including important ECCE components of social & emotional wellbeing, Storytelling, Literacy & Numeracy development and life skills activities important for school readiness and to keep students engaged for school enrollment & retention.

Research

- In 2019 ITA implemented Early Learning Partnership (ELP) systems research in Punjab and in 2021 in Sindh; focused on conducting a system's research on child readiness and learning levels of pre-primary schools' children. The study aimed at measuring program quality and development outcomes using the MELQO (Measuring Early Learning Quality Outcomes) tools which were aligned and adapted to local context. In Punjab it was administered on 672 children, 484 parents/caregivers and 99 head teachers/teachers across 99 ECE schools (75 govt. and 24 non-govt.). Similarly in Sindh it was administered on 1819 children with 1690 Caregivers/Parents and 108 Head Teaches/ECE Responses from 160 schools in 8 districts.

ECE Centers & Primary Grade Schools

- Since 2011 ITA under is running ECCE Centers and Primary schools across Sindh and Punjab including 16 pre-primary & primary schools with 13 under Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) Foundation Assisted School (FAS) Program and 3 under ITA owned schools. Similarly total 139 ECE centers are present in Punjab under Punjab Education Foundation and PIEMA projects with 41 ECCE centers in Muzafarghar, 6 in Kasur, 45 in Bhawalpur,29 in Chiniot and 18 in Rahim Yar Khan.