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## TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROFILE

**Country: Pakistan**

**Project Name: Releasing Confidence and Creativity (RCC): Building Sound Foundations for Early Learning in Pakistan**

**Funding Organization: USAID and Aga Khan Foundation**

**Implementing Partners: Aga Khan Foundation**

**Duration: December 2002 to May 2004 (Phase I Implementation Period); May 2004 to September 2006 (Phase II Implementation Period)**

<b>Overall project</b>	The goal of the Releasing Confidence and Creativity (RCC) project is to improve the quality of learning and teaching during the early primary years in select government schools and their surrounding communities in Pakistan.
<b>Program overview</b>	The RCC program described in this profile is divided in two phases. The first has a human capacity development emphasis while the second focuses on improving technical competencies for early childhood development. Activities have been carried out in 155 government schools in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan, Pakistan.
<b>Objectives of the teacher professional development program</b>	<p>RCC seeks to develop technical competencies for early childhood development in teachers, school officials, and NGOs in RCC communities. A clustering approach has been used to organize activities, such as teacher education, informational sessions with local government leaders, and community events.</p> <p>RCC identifies and provides teacher professional development for community early childhood education teachers to assist government teachers in pre-primary classes. Government teachers in lower primary grades also benefit from teacher professional development, mentoring, and follow-up.</p> <p>Teacher development activities are meant to orient community volunteers and lower primary school teachers to concepts of learning readiness for children, communities, and schools. Teachers are guided through strategies for easing children's transition to a school environment and sustaining children's self-confidence and interest in education.</p> <p>The teacher professional development program places emphasis on child-centered learning that facilitates cognitive development and socio-emotional health for young children. Teachers are encouraged and supported to work with children in their classroom in new ways that encourage discovery through play, greater self-esteem and confidence in relationships, and greater receptivity to new concepts.</p> <p>RCC is heavily influenced by research that suggests that attention to learning in the early</p>

	<p>years helps support a child’s achievement for years to come. Moreover, RCC is gathering evidence to show that investment in teacher professional development and school improvement in early years helps to dramatically reduce dropout and repetition rates in lower primary school, a critical time for children in many countries including Pakistan.</p>
<p><b>Background and context</b></p>	<p>RCC is a USAID-funded initiative designed to support the Ministry of Education in Pakistan in its efforts to formalize the pre-primary <i>katchi</i> class. When the National Plan of Action was issued in 2001, the Ministry of Education formally acknowledged the importance of early childhood education in helping Pakistan to reach Education for All goals. Shortly thereafter, the move to standardize the <i>katchi</i> class was given a tremendous boost by the launch of the national curriculum framework for this age group (three to five years).</p> <p>RCC was created as this launch was being orchestrated as a small-scale pilot in 100 schools that would test methods of teacher support and training to government schools for them to effectively integrate the new curriculum framework. The need for community teachers, who could assist the government teacher assigned to this class, was immediately prioritized by the three field-level Pakistani NGO partners involved in the project.</p> <p>As success and interest in the project grew, RCC has begun to focus on professional development and supporting teachers in higher grades to sustain the child-centered active learning methodologies first introduced in <i>katchi</i> class. This reach upward has been fed by teacher, community, school, and student demand for teacher professional development in the new techniques. The Ministry of Education has been paying attention to the small-scale pilot, and the second phase of the project has a greater emphasis on transitioning many of RCC’s activities to local government authorities.</p> <p>Each of the three service-delivery NGOs implementing the program have wide experience with cluster-based approaches to teacher professional development, and in fact had previously supported much of the sector before RCC started. However, the cluster concept for teacher professional development and support was new to some Ministry officials. Each of the three NGOs has slightly different definitions and approaches for their clusters. Overall, this has been useful for RCC purposes as a pilot intervention.</p>
<p><b>Organization of the program</b></p>	<p>RCC’s clustering approach is defined by each of the three school-level partners in the program. These NGOs are each responsible for 27 to 55 schools and have organized schools into clusters for teacher professional development but also use cluster divisions for other activities in the program, such as community campaigns, advocacy efforts with the local administrators, and related health interventions.</p> <p>Each cluster consists of approximately five schools. Teachers do not receive extra compensation for participating in RCC. However, the community-level teachers do receive a stipend from the school management committee, and part of their condition of service is that they will participate in all RCC professional development.</p> <p>The frequency of cluster-based meetings varies depending on the RCC-implementing NGO. Generally, teachers meet mostly around training or sharing opportunities one to three times a quarter. Specially trained lead teachers or mentor teachers who are either teachers in the clusters themselves or NGO employees facilitate the meetings to describe new techniques or talk about classroom experiences. School administrators participate on only a limited basis.</p>
<p><b>Program content and support materials</b></p>	<p>Each of the three NGOs working with teachers has different approaches to teacher development, although all of them use clusters to organize their training and support. As the thrust of teacher professional development in all three NGOs is to promote creativity in teachers and develop a stronger understanding of what is developmentally appropriate for children, each NGO starts its support to teachers with a core teacher professional development program. Usually this is a residential session of two weeks, where cluster</p>

	<p>teachers are given background concepts, classroom strategies, and resources. Two of the NGOs work in collaboration with an outside teacher professional development organization that follows this group of teachers in each of their residential professional development activities. The other NGO does all teacher professional development in-house.</p> <p>Content for the first professional development session is based on the NGOs' experience and observation in the classroom. Generally, this first session does not change much from year to year. During the session, teachers are given a resource kit with ideas for creative teaching, a copy of the national curriculum framework, and handouts or manuals on early childhood development concepts and teaching strategies.</p> <p>This is followed by intensive classroom follow-up and support by NGO staff and then at least one substantial refresher teacher professional development program during the year. The refresher teacher professional development program is designed to meet the needs of teachers who have come from classroom observations and visits. Short seminars, special in-service days, school activity days, and exchange visits serve to support teachers on an ongoing basis and encourage sharing among cluster teachers.</p> <p>District education officers are involved where possible and appropriate, and NGOs have lead teachers or mentor teachers who work with each teacher cluster. Visits from these resource persons aide teachers by modeling teaching through guest lessons in the classroom, reviewing lesson plans, sharing ideas or materials, and giving regular feedback. The cluster arrangement helps resource people to develop relationships and encourage sharing among peers.</p>
<b>Costs</b>	<p>At present, the program is funded jointly by USAID and the Aga Khan Foundation. The six Pakistani NGOs involved in the program also provide in-kind contributions to program development and delivery through the provision of some staff time and the use of equipment.</p>
<b>Indicators and results</b>	<p>Results of the RCC program have been very promising thus far. With full data from only one school year, more than 90 percent of eligible children who have been a part of RCC classrooms are moving from <i>katchi</i> class to grade one, a substantial achievement in regions plagued by high dropout rates. Classroom observations show that more than 90 percent of teachers who have participated in the program are using child-friendly teaching strategies in their classrooms. Anecdotal evidence tells us that parents are discovering new confidence in their children, and teachers are more satisfied with their own interaction with children.</p> <p>RCC has placed substantial emphasis on collecting research-based evidence that can be used to advocate for increased resources to the lower primary level. An extensive baseline survey and follow-up totaling more than 3,000 subjects has been conducted in an effort to examine how the program affects communities, schools, and children. Results have not been fully analyzed yet, but preliminary information suggests that the project has had an extremely positive effect on building children's confidence and creativity.</p> <p>Cluster-based training and regular exchange visits of professionals within a cluster have helped to create support networks whereby successes and challenges can be shared and discussed. Implementing partners have also found that cluster-based activities facilitate their own monitoring and advocacy functions by encouraging more self-assessment and promotion of program aims at the school level.</p> <p>Moreover, clustering has facilitated resource mobilization for early childhood education activities in program schools as well as for nearby schools by targeting key local decision-makers in a given geographic area. Targeting community activities to groups of schools at the same time has increased local ownership of the program. Coordinated awareness campaigns, school competitions, and community participation efforts have generated enthusiasm among parents by increasing their involvement and investment in the wider program's success.</p>