

A DECADE OF LEARNING

Informing Education Policy and Practice



Over the past decade, Pakistan has made considerable progress in transforming its education system. Funding from the UK Government and other development partners has been important in this transformation. The UK Government invested £800 million in a decade-long, seven-programme bilateral portfolio of UK investment in Pakistan's education system. This investment directly supported approximately 5.8 million children to gain access to free education across Pakistan. In Punjab alone, 1.23 million children were enrolled in public schools, while funding enabled 2.6 million children to attend low-cost private and non-state schools. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, enrolment in primary and secondary schools increased by 55% between 2011 and 2018.

The UK Government's investment aligned with a significant focus on and investment in education by the Government of Pakistan and other development partners. In this period, Pakistan has been at the centre of the global debate on education policy on what works in education, from global research programmes to national innovation funds. Capturing "A Decade of Learning" in Pakistan is, therefore, important to inform the current and future education debate in Pakistan on how to support learning for all children in Pakistan most effectively. The lessons explored during the "Decade of Learning" event come from the bilateral and centrally managed UK Government investments in Pakistan and the Government of Pakistan and other partners' investments.

Despite the successes, Pakistan continues to experience a learning crisis (today, 8 in 10 children cannot read a short paragraph with comprehension by age 10). The covid-19 pandemic and school closures were closely followed by devastating floods, setting education back and creating new challenges to ensuring that all children everywhere have access to education in Pakistan. This event is an opportunity to learn about what has worked in Pakistan's education reforms from global research and to discuss how these lessons can inform education policymaking in Pakistan in the coming decade.

Over the two days, the event will consider Pakistan's last decade of education reforms. It will compare the impact of these interventions with similar approaches worldwide and debate the contribution the Pakistan experience has made to the global evidence base. On the second day, participants will consider the emerging international evidence of what works to deliver high-quality foundational learning for all, especially girls, and debate how Governments and international partners can apply this learning in Pakistan.

The event aims to focus on what Pakistan can do in the next decade to increase the number of girls in education, reduce the number of out-of-school children, and improve learning outcomes, by focusing on five central themes which are covered in different sessions:

1. Lessons from a "Decade of Learning" in Pakistan:

This theme emphasises the key lessons from the ten years of UK Government investment in Pakistan's education system, emphasising the importance of political support to reforming the education system. The objective is to debate how governments and political parties can ensure that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background and where they live, have access to education and that they learn, progress and complete basic education.

2. Reflections on education transformations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab:

Focusing on the two large UK Government investments in Pakistan, this theme will discuss the successes and challenges encountered in strengthening education in each province and the importance of shifting to a focus on learning outcomes to build a more inclusive and equitable education system.

3. What works in education:

Works in education Will be a series of presentations on what the global education community has learnt about what works in education, drawing on global evidence and specific evidence from Pakistan and Brazil. The focus will be on improving foundational learning, developing a commitment to all children learning to read, do basic maths, and build socio-emotional skills by the age of ten.

4. The importance of citizen engagement in education:

Global evidence has consistently shown that providing parents with information on the benefits of education significantly impacts children remaining in school. The Alif Ailaan programme (running until 2018) showed how public messaging could shift the political debate on education. Pakistan has been a pioneer in finding ways to involve citizens in education; the question for the next decade is how to maintain citizen engagement in education.

5. Girls' education:

Girls' education in Pakistan remains deeply problematic (9% of the world's out-of-school girls live in Pakistan); the focus of the Girls' Education panel discussion will be on how to support girls to progress to and complete secondary education. A key question that the event will explore is how all political parties can commit to every girl, everywhere, no matter how isolated, poor, or vulnerable she is, having access to safe and high-quality education.

