



Smarter Data Regime: Effective Monitoring, Informed Decisions

Understanding the value of data, measuring the right things, and making sense of it all to make informed decisions are critical challenges vis-à-vis the data regime. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), education data collection routines followed the analogue approach—a cumbersome and time-consuming process that raised questions about the data collection processes, accuracy and validity. Resultantly, when interventions were implemented, they were frequently outdated and hence were far more likely to be unable to deliver. To address this, FCDO-funded KESP TA assisted the Elementary & Secondary Education Department (E&SED) in establishing the Education Management Authority (EMA) to ensure that E&SED transitioned to data-based decision-making.

Since its inception, EMA has been a reliable source of information, assisting in tracking key education indicators and revising monitoring mechanisms to ensure that E&SED is adequately equipped to provide education services across the province. EMA created time-sensitive technology-based systems for data collection and management. The availability of a solid data repository has been critical in running data analytics in KP based on longitudinal trends on key education indicators. The authority has been the principal catalyst in transforming the education governance in the province. EMA boasts 28 District Monitoring Officers (DMOs) and 550 Data Collection & Monitoring Assistants (DCMAs)—centrally managed by a team of officers led by the Director General of EMA. Based on the district routines, EMA field teams visit all 28,000 KP schools monthly, collecting data on 22 key education indicators through a customised monitoring app. The DCMAs carry Tablets capable of collecting both online and offline data. The information is linked to the Authority's centralised database for prompt updating in their data repository.

EMA provides its own operational budget on an annual basis and plays a critical role in KP's education landscape. Supported by KESP TA, the Authority's scope also encompasses the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs). EMA recruited 138 new DCMAs, specifically for NMDs, and since the fall of 2020, systematic data collection has been ongoing in NMDs and annually reported in KP's Annual School Census. Approximately 90% of the schools in NMDs are visited monthly by the DCMAs, which means access to much-needed support for the previously neglected regions.

Besides reforms in the monitoring processes, EMA has been a primary enabler of the reform agenda. EMA data drives the development of various interventions directly impacting the provision of public schools' best possible teaching environment and facilities. Ever since the inception of EMA and subsequent strengthening of the data reporting systems, all indicators of missing facilities have shown improvement; the percentage of schools having electricity has risen from 62 to 92%; water facilities from 73 to 93%; boundary walls from 87 to 96%; and functioning toilets from 84 to 99%. Enhancement in these indicators translated in more children—71 to 81%—coming to and staying in schools. "At the outset, 465 schools in KPK were non-functional or closed. This number took a nosedive and now stands at 111," shares Ms. Rukhsana Aziz, Planning Officer at E&SED. EMA has been instrumental in establishing a data architecture, using a day-to-day standard operating manual. The Authority is now indispensable for E&SED, the district management, and the Government of KP. The EMA is one of the biggest success stories emanating from KP in the last decade and will be critical in steering education reforms in the province in the coming years.