CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

How-to Guide

Promoting Education for All in Conservative Areas

How-to Guide Series

Promoting Education for All in Conservative Areas

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Letter from CRS Education Unit

Dear friends and colleagues,

We are pleased to present this latest edition in our CRS education 'How-to' series, *Promoting Education for All in Conservative Areas*, created by CRS/Pakistan.

The 'How-to' guide series allows CRS country programs and their local implementing partners to highlight and share elements of their work that have been particularly successful and that have potential relevance across projects and borders. Instead of presenting a detailed description of their program history and accomplishments, however, the focus of these guides is on the practical steps that other CRS country programs and partner organizations could take to adopt similar activities.

The recommendations will need to be interpreted for each particular context, but the topics addressed in each guide could strengthen and improve any existing program: how to incorporate the building of values into education; how to prepare teachers for inclusive education; how to develop effective school improvement plans.

This guide, based on CRS/Pakistan's experience in working with religious leaders, communities, and schools, promotes education for all in conservative areas, outlining a step-by-step process for bringing about positive change at the community level. This process includes engaging first with the religious leaders, both as gatekeepers to the wider community and as catalysts for change, engaging with community structures themselves, and finally linking communities to government structures. This guide shows that careful consideration of, and respect for, cultural and religious values and traditions is essential to promoting sustainable education for all. As a result of these efforts, overall primary school enrollment in the targeted communities rose by 30%, and boys' attendance increased by 64% while girls' attendance increased by 87%, all in an area where literacy rates are drastically low as compared to the national average.

This guide presents many useful suggestions for ways to engage with these stakeholders in a considerate and transformative way. We hope that the steps and ideas outlined here will assist you in promoting education for all in your own context.

Best wishes,

Anne Sellers
CRS Senior Education
Technical Advisor

Naoko Kamioka
CRS Senior Education
Technical Advisor

Letter from CRS/Pakistan Country Representative

Dear friends and colleagues,

CRS/Pakistan is pleased to present this 'How-to' guide on Promoting Education for All in Conservative Areas. This guide details projects implemented in Shangla and Kohistan Districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province in Northwestern Pakistan from 2010 to 2013. During this time, CRS worked with Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs), Mothers' Groups, school administrators, district education officials, and local religious leaders to increase school enrollment and attendance as well as improve the quality of education in schools across KPK Province.

Behavior change messaging with various audiences was paramount to the success of these education projects in KPK Province. Behavior change relies first and foremost on cooperation from local religious leaders who hold positions of authority and respect in society but are not often involved in formal education activities. CRS Pakistan education programming teams in KPK acknowledged that engaging and collaborating with local religious leaders was paramount to changing view points on education in the community. Local religious leaders were able to promote education by using messages from the Quran and Hadith which emphasized the importance of education and lead to behavior change over time. Once local religious leaders were involved in promoting education, CRS and partner staff worked with them to engage parents and teachers to build their capacity and promote education in the community. Finally, CRS and partner staff strengthened linkages between local government authorities and communities to ensure better communication regarding school management and education promotion.

This guide is divided into three sections—engaging with religious leaders; engaging with parents and teachers; and creating linkages between local government and communities. The first section presents ideas and suggestions on how to engage local religious leaders to identify key religious messages and promote education to encourage community acceptance and support. The second section discusses engaging PTCs, Mothers' Group (MG) members, and other community members in key education promotion activities. The third section details ways to link local government and communities to ensure proper coordination and project sustainability.

This guide is intended for individuals and organizations interested in implementing formal education programs in conservative societies. This may include staff and local implementing partners of CRS in Pakistan or other countries, teachers and school administrators, and other local or international organizations aiming to promote formal education in similar environments. Although this project was developed within the Pakistan context, similar projects have been implemented in Afghanistan and other culturally conservative areas. As such, it is our hope that its methodology will be useful in many other contexts as well.

Sincerely,

Andrew Schaefer
CRS Pakistan Country Representative

Introduction

WHY THIS 'HOW TO' GUIDE: The objective of this guide is to provide other CRS Country Programs and partner organizations with a replicable model to promote education in other culturally conservative contexts by involving religious leaders and highlighting religious texts in conjunction with other, more traditional community mobilisation activities. CRS has learned from experience that locally rooted, community-driven approaches are essential to overcoming cultural attitudes against formal education, particularly for girls. CRS Pakistan's previous work in gender-based violence prevention has shown that the religious texts of Islam (Quran & Hadiths) can be effectively used to encourage community-driven behaviour change. This, in conjunction with targeting key religious leaders as part of the community mobilization strategy, helps to increase school enrolment and attendance, particularly for girls.

BACKGROUND: Education represents one of the most persistent human development challenges in Pakistan, a country of 187 million people. Though Pakistan is rich in human resources, public expenditure on education is among the lowest in the world at a mere 2.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).[1] The low level of public investment in education has various consequences. First, enrollment is low; national net enrollment rates were 64% for girls and 78% for boys in 2008.[2] Low enrollment rates result in nearly 10 million children nationally who do not attend school.[3] Second, even with this low enrollment, teachers are over-burdened and poorly trained. Teacher absenteeism is an issue, and many teachers in government schools are politically appointed to their post, which makes it nearly impossible to terminate under-performing teachers that fail to regularly teach classes. Furthermore, out-of-date teaching methods and limited teaching aids also inhibit students' educational development. Third, lack of district-level monitoring by the Department of Education (DoE) contributes to poor teacher performance. Finally, untrained and inactive PTCs—local government-mandated bodies charged with school management—fail to drive local initiatives to improve access to quality education.

Consequently, Pakistan's adult literacy rate of 55% is one of the lowest in the world with high gender disparity; 69% for men and 40% for women.[4] The national youth literacy rate of 71% (ages 15-24) is higher than that of adults in Pakistan, but the gender disparity remains; 79% for boys and 59% for girls.[5]

Several socio-cultural elements exacerbate low literacy and low enrollment rates, particularly for girls. First, families generally prioritize the education of boys, who are seen as future breadwinners; in contrast, girls' labour is valued in the home, so their education is seen as

1 UNESCO. Institute for Statistics. "Pakistan Education Profile (all levels)." http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=5860 . December 10, 2011.
2 Ibid.
3 UNICEF Pakistan Statistics—Education. http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/pakistan_pakistan_statistics.html December 5th 2011.
4 UNESCO. Institute for Statistics. "Pakistan Education Profile (all levels)." http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=5860 . December 10, 2011.
5 UNICEF Pakistan Statistics—Education. http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/pakistan_pakistan_statistics.html December 5th 2011.

Meeting with PTC members and teachers GPS Kuz Gabar UC Jilal. Photo credit: CRS Besham Staff

unnecessary and oftentimes incongruous. Educating girls is considered inappropriate in some communities due to strict observation of 'purdah,' the cultural practice of women remaining unseen in society, which prevents girls from going to the same schools as boys or from traveling to other nearby schools. Second, low education levels among parents combined with a lack of awareness of education's benefits leads parents to keep their children out of school. Likewise, since parents with low education levels themselves are often unaware of the benefits of education, there is little community motivation to oversee and improve schools through participation in PTCs. Moreover, large-scale natural disasters in Pakistan, particularly the 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods, further constrain the ability of the Government of Pakistan and parents to prioritize consistent quality education for all children, as these natural disasters destroy existing infrastructure and increase impending needs in these communities. During these periods, the government and many households turn their attention and pecuniary resources to emergency response and livelihoods, often neglecting education. Given this situation, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Pakistan, including Catholic Relief Services (CRS), have taken on the task of improving access to quality education in collaboration with local partners.

In rural communities throughout Pakistan, locally-developed, community-driven approaches towards universal primary education are essential to shift negative cultural and traditional attitudes against formal education,[6] particularly for girls. However, traditional and cultural values can also be used as a foundation to improve educational outcomes. In

6 "Formal education" for the purpose of this document is defined as the provision of education using the National Pakistani Education Curriculum, which includes Islamic studies, literacy and numeracy for lower levels and adds science, history, and English for Grades 3-5.

April 2010 with funding from the UBS Optimus Foundation, CRS embarked on the project *"Building on Traditional Values to Enrol Primary School Children"* to improve literacy in Pakistan's Shangla and Kohistan districts—two districts where literacy levels are reported as 22% for men and 3% for women, enrollment hovers around 24%, and school attendance ranges from 50-80%.

To achieve the difficult goal of changing attitudes about education and promoting quality education in an environment of traditional values, CRS has adopted a culturally sensitive approach of intensive community accompaniment. This approach involves working with religious leaders, Parent Teacher Councils, teachers, government officials and other stakeholders. Most notably, CRS Pakistan helped communities use their traditional values as a central part of the strategy to improve educational outcomes for all children. This mobilization strategy, based on identifying and embracing positive education values, has been successful in improving enrollment and retention and, although not an explicit objective, in shifting negative attitudes and beliefs.

By the end of the project, a final project evaluation showed that the target schools experienced an average enrollment increase of 30% (43% for boys and 19% for girls); boys' attendance increased 64% while girls' attendance increased by 87%; and communities expressed important changes in attitudes about girls' education. For example, while only 4% of respondents in control communities strongly agreed with the statement "my daughter will be a better mother if she is educated," 24% of respondents in target communities strongly agreed with this statement.

Preparing for an Education Project in a Culturally Conservative Area

It is critical to note that any organization attempting to conduct similar activities should **first seek to build genuine, trusting relationships with the community.**

CRS/Pakistan's education projects are reliant on close collaboration and coordination with local NGO partners, who are from the project implementation areas and are thus well positioned to work in and understand communities.

In the case of Pakistan, CRS has been the only international agency operating continuously in Shangla and Kohistan districts since the earthquake in October 2005. CRS brings a proven track record to these areas and a reputation of transparency and fairness. This results in participatory and cooperative communities, as they recognize the work that CRS has done to date in emergency relief, education construction, infrastructure repair, and water rehabilitation.

How to build genuine, trusting relationships with communities*

Some tips:

- An emergency response can help build relationships when the response is timely, appropriate, and effective
- Conduct thorough, participatory assessments
- Operate in the 'local language' (staff speak local language, written materials are available in local languages, etc.)
- Hire local staff from the communities (with close oversight from outside the community to avoid accusations of favoritism)
- Encourage the project/field team to take the time to get to know each community in which they work and to recognize that building trust takes time
- Institute a feedback or complaint mechanism (type depends on what is technologically and culturally appropriate)**
- Implement mid-course corrections based on high-quality, participatory M&E
- Pay close attention to and continually assess that you are respecting all cultural norms in terms of visit procedures and project implementation, especially in regards to respecting social hierarchies and following local procedures

* The time it takes to establish good relationships will depend on the community. With deeply distrustful communities, it will take much longer.

** Feedback mechanisms should be developed by the project team in collaboration with community leaders, who can together discern the best ways in which to solicit feedback from community leaders and members. Feedback collection tools may include: a telephone line that people can call or text; complaint boxes; town hall-style meetings; feedback surveys; etc.

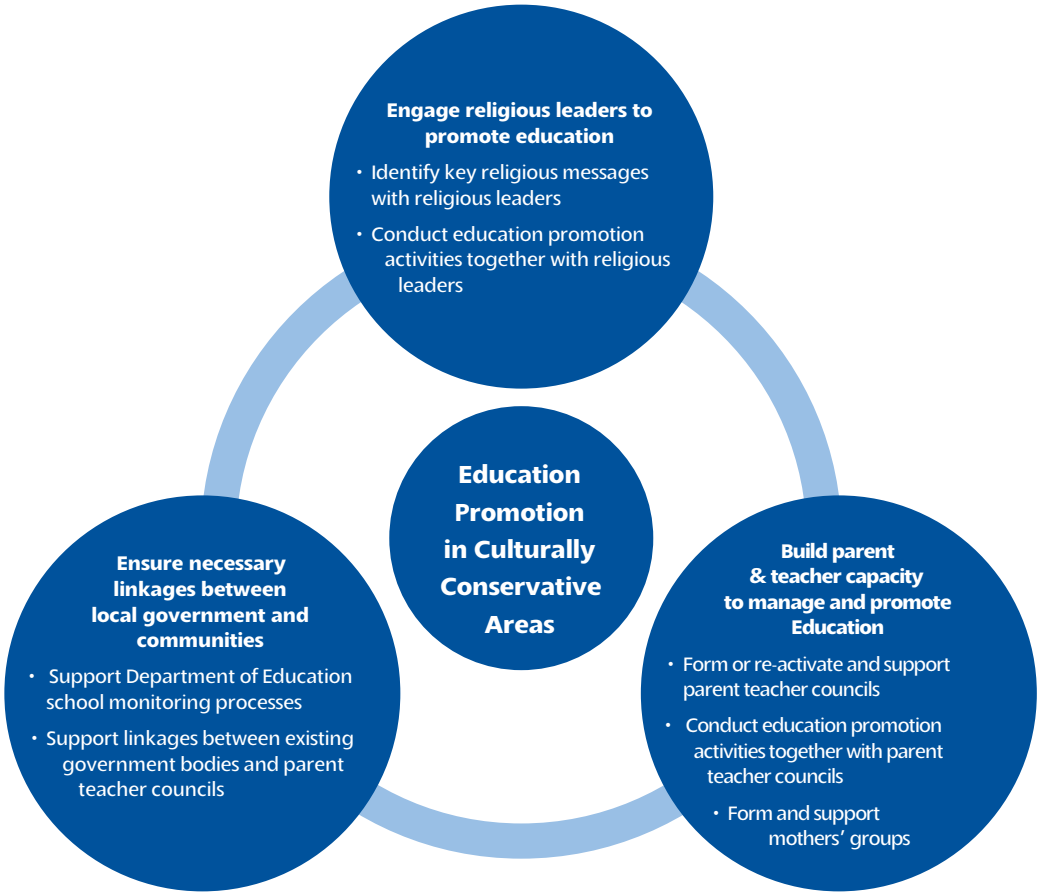
Many of the interventions described in this document—reactivating and orienting PTCs to ensure community support and coordinating with teachers and the Department of Education; forming MGs to ensure that mothers have a more formal space to be involved in their children's education; and school inaugurations to publicly celebrate educational opportunities within the community—were possible due to the close personal relationships CRS staff have with the various stakeholders.

Working with religious leaders from communities in Pakistan,[7] while essential, remains a sensitive aspect of any project intervention. Over the course of several years, highly experienced and committed CRS staff, 90% of whom are from the region where CRS implements its

7 It is important to note that the discussed project in Pakistan was implemented in a uniform religious context (all Islam and all Sunni). In a more diverse context, this approach may also work; however, more caution would need to be taken to involve and prepare all religious leaders along the lines explained in the "Exposure Visit" preparations (i.e., focusing on education, respecting one another, etc.).

education programming, have earned the trust of religious leaders, influential persons, and community members by implementing high-quality and appropriate projects while respecting local culture and values. Religious leaders and influential community members have been cooperative and supportive of the project and the new approach because they trust CRS and its local partners based on previous experience. Communities for this project (funded by UBS Optimus Foundation and implemented by CRS) were selected following thorough assessments to determine the specific needs of each community and whether this project would be appropriate. Considerations included: geographic features; demographic features; institutional functionality; structural adequacy of learning, and learning-associated areas.[8]

Also, it is important to consider that in this initiative there is no one correct way to begin or universal 'first step,' as this will vary depending on the location and existing conditions in the communities where NGOs work. It is key that these elements be considered as part of a cycle, each building upon and strengthening the others. The below diagram outlines the key components of this cycle:



8 For further detail regarding community selection criteria and experiences, please refer to the "CRS Pakistan Education Toolkit" mentioned in the "Additional Resources" Section.

I. HOW TO ENGAGE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO PROMOTE EDUCATION

Meeting of religious leaders to discuss importance of education. Photo credit: Jennifer Hardy /CRS

INTRODUCTION: In culturally conservative areas, where religion and faith hold centrality in both family and community life, religious leaders—respected as role models for their religious knowledge and devoutness—are regularly consulted by community members for advice on personal as well as family decisions. Given the close relationship between individuals and the local religious leader(s), individuals will look to religious leaders for guidance on decisions related to community matters, making them very influential. Through their speeches, advice and presence, religious leaders have the capacity to inspire and encourage their congregation to support an idea or effort. Equally, they can restrict or prohibit support of ventures such as NGO-sponsored activities. Involving religious leaders in community development decisions is more than just important; it is essential. Religious leaders are an entry point to communities, vital participants who are paramount to a project's success.

This is certainly true in the case of rural Pakistan, where religious leaders have a strong influence on attitudes and behaviours. Unless religious leaders personally embrace the value of education—especially for girls—projects aiming to promote education have little hope of success. This influence and the sense of personal ownership that religious leaders can have about educational outcomes make them key actors in any effort to mobilise the community to value and take responsibility for the education of boys and girls.

Two phases are recommended when working with religious leaders:

PHASE 1: Work with religious leaders to identify key religious messages for community mobilization around education for boys and girls

PHASE 2: Include religious leaders in key education promotion activities to encourage community acceptance and support

What about resistant religious leaders?

Even if a good relationship with the community exists (which is necessary before starting this type of project), it is wise to operate under the assumption that some religious leaders likely WILL BE resistant as they will typically be the most conservative and/or most suspicious of external actors (especially faith-based organizations) and you may find that even once you have gained the trust of the community, a religious leader may actively stand in the way of the work (i.e., during a religious community gathering he might accuse the organization of trying to convert people). In this case, hold one-on-one meetings with religious leaders and ensure that your most religiously observant and/or knowledgeable staff are holding these discussions. Take special care to foster this relationship.

Phase 1: Work with religious leaders to identify key religious messages for community mobilization around education for boys and girls

When planning this phase, consider organizing two levels of workshops, as the engagement of all levels of religious hierarchy encourages buy-in from participants and helps ensure support both at local and higher levels. First, start by working with local religious leaders to begin to identify the faith-inspired messages that support and promote education for girls and boys. Subsequently, hold a higher-level workshop with senior religious leaders to validate and build upon the suggestions of local religious leaders.

Why workshops? The workshops help to maintain and renew pre-existing relationships NGO personnel have with religious leaders. They provide critical opportunities to consult with and elicit support from different key religious leaders in editing and validating the translation and interpretation of religious messages. The intensive involvement of religious leaders enables them to educate community members about these messages and the value of education, thereby bridging any misunderstandings community members may have about what their faith says about formal education.

> *"In the case of Pakistan, workshops were also an ideal opportunity for religious leaders to brainstorm creative, Islamic-focused ways to disseminate messages to both literate and illiterate members of the community, such as wall clocks, wall hangings, table calendars, pocket booklets, etc."*

Step 1: Identification of key stakeholders prior to workshops

Interacting and coordinating with religious leaders prior to the workshops will help to develop strong relations. The process is best initiated by the formation of a committee

comprised of NGO staff who employ a myriad of techniques (key informant interviews, focus group discussions with community members, etc.) to identify religious leaders, collect key education messages, and coordinate with religious leaders in targeted communities. When selecting committee members, criteria to consider include: willingness, past experience in the area, knowledge about relevant religion, educational background, personal links with religious leaders, good reputation and acceptance among the communities, and strong coordination, communication, and conflict resolution skills.

PTC members discussing education promotion activities in Kohistan District. Photo Credit: Jennifer Hardy /CRS

Once the committee is formed, it can then undertake the following tasks:

1. Identify religious leaders, considering interest in boosting literacy; willingness to volunteer one's time; and good reputation in the religious community and in the targeted area.
2. Prepare a list of religious leaders and assign those committee members with already-established relationships to reach out to each identified religious leader. Committee members hold individual meetings with assigned religious leaders—prioritizing the most influential—to secure support for the project. In these individual meetings, committee members bring attention to the idea of using religious messages to improve the education environment and increase enrollment in schools.
3. Extend an invitation in person, first to a prominent religious leader, to participate. Once a prominent religious leader is on-board, the less-prominent religious leaders generally will have fewer qualms or misconceptions regarding interaction with development organizations.
4. Extend invitations to less-prominent religious leaders.
5. Arrange a meeting space and purchase sufficient refreshments.

Step 2: Organizing small-scale workshops (village/cluster-level)

Village and cluster-level workshops offer an opportunity to engage religious leaders who will have day-to-day contact with target communities and who will directly support education for boys and girls in communities.

Start by collecting a final list of the religious leaders and other influential people of the villages who need to be gathered in a cluster meeting (where various village leaders will gather), and prepare charts of the key messages already identified in pre-consultations. Pre-existing contacts in the villages can be used to invite religious leaders and influential people, but the

time should be based on their convenience. NGO management may consider selecting their own representatives based on their knowledge of the key messages to be discussed in the meeting (messages to be displayed on charts during meeting). During the meeting, NGO representatives will present the project objectives and strategy with the gathered religious leaders, invite their support in identifying more relevant messages, and discuss how they are willing to support the project through the dissemination of these messages. Allow time and space for the conclusion of the meeting with prayers by a prominent religious leader.

Grand meeting with religious leaders. Photo credit: CRS Besham Staff

Step 3: Organizing "Grand Workshops"

'Grand workshops' include prominent religious leaders and are conducted after the village and cluster-level workshops. These second-tier workshops provide an opportunity to validate messages and ensure that prominent religious leaders will support local religious leaders to promote education.

Messages collected during small-scale workshops and from the initial consultations can be displayed on the walls of the meeting space to support explanations of how the messages were selected. The facilitator may ask the group if any additional messages should be added and invite ideas and feedback about appropriate ways to disseminate key religious messages. It is important to build consensus to ensure that by the end of the 'grand workshop,' leaders agree unanimously to support the key messages, which have been identified to promote education for girls and boys. Identifying and prioritizing simple and easily understandable messages helps to gain consensus among religious leaders.

Quick Tips for Hosting Workshops with Religious Leaders:

- Always begin with a formal welcome with the relevant religion's (or religions') welcoming practice (I.e., recitation from Quran, prayer)
- Provide information about all aspects of the project
- Acknowledge the significance of religious leaders' participation and answer any questions they may have
- Address religious leaders with appropriate titles and respect protocol related to differing levels of significance among religious leaders

Step 4: After the workshops

Using identified religious messages in creative awareness-raising approaches. Following the workshops, the NGO staff can begin to use the key religious messages identified to develop sensitization materials, and religious leaders can begin promoting the messages in the communities. The combination of the use of religious messages with support from local religious leaders is critical to changing attitudes about formal education.

Examples of Religious Education Messages from the Holy Quran and Hadiths Selected by Local Religious Leaders for Dissemination

- Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught humans that which he knew not.
- In fact, I have been sent (by Allah) as a teacher.
- Say (O Prophet): "Are those who know equal to those who know not? (It is sure they are not equal)"
- To seek knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim male and female.
- Seek knowledge from cradle (birth) to grave (death)

It is strongly recommended that NGO staff:

- Study the key religious messages. Good knowledge of the verses makes interaction with the religious leaders easier and motivates them to disseminate messages.
- Create a pocket-sized booklet[9] of key religious messages, adding the personal views and explanations of some of the prominent religious leaders. These explanations encourage the readers (other religious leaders and community members) to use the messages to promote education.
- Organize and hold a follow-up meeting with religious leaders or consult with some of the prominent religious leaders who participated in the grand meeting to agree on a few specific messages (from identified messages) emphasizing children's education, which are to be used during their speeches at education promotion events and during other opportunities such as religious community gatherings.
- Identify, design, and procure key sensitization materials in coordination with religious leaders. Develop materials using common and understandable messages, and finalize

9 In a recent CRS/Pakistan Education Project, 500 copies of this booklet were printed. The booklet contained select Quranic and Holy Hadith messages that were selected by local religious leaders to promote education. These booklets were provided to key stakeholders in each community, which included religious leaders, parents, Parent Teacher Council (PTC) members, Mothers' Group (MG) members, and Education Department Officials. Other organizations operating in the area also received a booklet for their offices.

a materials distribution plan and strategy. Note that use of local languages in the messages allows for better comprehension and increases the appeal of messages in the community.[10] NGO staff can then hand over dissemination material to stakeholders, including religious leaders, PTCs and MGs, the Education Department in all project districts, any other relevant Government Department district offices, and any other organizations working on education projects in the targeted area. Materials should be posted in public places, except for materials that PTCs and MGs identify as items that they would rather distribute directly to households. It is important that NGO staff acknowledge and follow up on community feedback, and continue follow up visits with each stakeholder to discuss material distribution.

Important Tip for Phase 1: *Respect and adhere to religious hierarchy. By engaging all levels of religious hierarchy in the areas of intervention, projects can build upon existing local structures and norms to ensure consistent educational messaging and to enable senior religious leaders to promote these messages with local religious leaders.*[11]

Phase 2: Include religious leaders in key education promotion activities to encourage community acceptance and support

Fostering change in attitudes among community decision makers allows for sustainable education promotion projects. One way to encourage decision makers to value education is to expose them to other communities where education has had positive effects (host communities), enabling them to see the benefits of education and understand the positives of formal education. Exposure visits for PTCs are even more effective when religious leaders are included because of the respect given them by other participants. Involving religious leaders in exposure visits elicits more participation from the participants and more quickly builds trust in the approach.

Step 1: Preparing for Exposure Visits

Preparing both targeted communities and host communities is key to ensuring a positive exposure visit. To select an appropriate host community, consider the following criteria: similar topography; similar or a more extreme level of remoteness and/or resource scarcity; whether the host community has already benefited from an education project that has had positive effects on community attitudes about education; similar education systems and community structures. The exposure visit should be arranged for trained PTC members and

10 In the case of Pakistan, messages were written in Arabic, Urdu, and local languages.

11 In the case of Pakistan, local religious leaders, Imams, are the people who are leading the daily prayers at the mosque(s) in the village. In general, their influence is at the village level. Senior religious leaders typically have more religious knowledge, as they are often qualified religious scholars, or Aalim. They are respected at a larger level and can have influence with Union Councils, District Officials, and sometimes even at the national level. They may lead Friday prayers and/or manage large Madrassas.

PTC Member asking questions of the primary school teacher during the Exposure visit to Gilgit. Photo Credit: CRS Besham Staff

local religious leaders. The purpose of the exposure visit needs to be shared clearly with all participants: to be exposed to the host community's education achievements and to return with new ideas, motivations, and strategies for strengthening education promotion/services in their own communities.

While planning for the exposure visits, it is important to communicate cultural differences in such a way to avoid conflict and to promote acceptance and respect. It can be very beneficial when NGO staff communicate clearly the beliefs and values of the respective communities to both host community and target community participants prior to the visit. (However, note that once embarking on the exposure visit, it is important to only emphasize the objectives of the visit. Host community culture should not be discussed during the visit itself.)

Step 2: During Exposure Visits

Ensuring a positive environment and experience is crucial to guaranteeing that participants have a positive impression of the trip and are open to the new ideas presented during visits. First, the visit should be organized around the visitors' usual routine(s). It is best for NGO staff to avoid displaying any overt signs of personal taste that may be viewed as offensive out of respect for religious beliefs. For example, in rural Pakistan it would be offensive to play secular music during a car ride, but Islamic cassettes offer a good alternative. Also, in

transport vehicles, adhere to an appropriate seating arrangement (i.e., to show respect for status). Arrange suitable accommodation and food for visitors, and frequently check on satisfaction levels of all participants through daily check-in sessions. Setting up a meeting with the host community's religious leaders to highlight the role of religious leaders in promoting children's education gives religious leaders a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities as members of trained PTCs. To allow for meaningful exchange to achieve the exposure visit's objective, the host community should be encouraged to share with participants their experience of mobilising their own community to place greater value on children's education.

Important Tip for Phase 2: *Avoid discussion of controversial issues (i.e. politics, religion, and specific ethnic groups' traditions and culture) as this may make people feel defensive and will limit how open they are to considering the new ideas to which they are being exposed. Whenever there is more than one religious leader, the most senior should be used as a resource to help resolve any controversial issues that arise during discussions and visit. This person should be identified at the beginning of the trip and staff should speak with the leader about playing this role.*

SUCCESS STORY: ENGAGING RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND BOYS

Qari Riaz providing information for a success story on his community's school. Photo credit: CRS Besham Staff

Qari Mohammad Riaz, a religious leader and religious education teacher of 45 students in one of CRS/Pakistan's target villages, was not always so fond of NGOs; in fact, he was one of the prominent figures campaigning against his village's collaboration with NGOs. Over the course of a few years, however, he has become an ambassador for the CRS education project in Pakistan's Shangla and Kohistan districts, as he now considers formal education a pre-requisite for religious education. His perception of NGOs began to change in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake, which affected his village. Mr. Riaz recalls, *"I met with CRS staff in Maira and inquired from them about their work. They briefed me about their activities. In the aftermath of the earthquake, drinking water availability was the major problem faced by our villagers. As CRS was involved in the restoration of such schemes, our community requested assistance for the restoration of the drinking water supply scheme, which was honoured by CRS and the problem was solved. It was an eye opening activity for transforming my perception and ideas, as provision of drinking water is highly valued in Islam. I was convinced that NGOs are serving humanity."*

> *"I was convinced that NGOs are serving humanity."*

When CRS started discussing children's education with community leaders, Qari Mohammad Riaz was eager to participate in the workshop to compile key education-supportive Quranic verses and Hadiths. But what really inspired him was his participation in an exposure visit to another village to experience first-hand an existing community-led education system and learn about its achievements. *"I was impressed by the quality of education in the Northern area (Gilgit, Baltistan), and the role of the community in the promotion of education. Upon returning to my village, I was determined to start formal education in my madrasa and started work on the construction of additional rooms for this purpose,"* stated Mr. Riaz with pride.

Now, Qari Mohammad Riaz dedicates a portion of Friday prayer time, through Quranic verses and Hadiths, to convince parents to send their children to school for formal education by emphasizing the importance of education and the role and responsibility of parents towards their children's education. He said, *"The CRS education project is very successful at community mobilization; now community members are aware and take interest in their children's education. The teachers come regularly, students' enrollment and attendance have improved, and students' learning capabilities are enhanced."*

II. HOW TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO MANAGE AND PROMOTE EDUCATION IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION: Worldwide, parents play a pivotal role in making positive changes in school settings. The extent to which parents value education for both boys and girls can dramatically affect enrolment and attendance rates of school-aged children. Especially in areas where government enforcement of school enrollment and attendance is limited, parents can decide whether and how often children attend school. Therefore, improved outcomes in enrollment, attendance, and literacy—especially for girls—require the active involvement of parents and teachers.

> *"The extent to which parents value education for both boys and girls can dramatically affect enrollment and attendance rates of school-aged children."*

In Pakistan, PTCs are government-mandated bodies with administrative and financial responsibilities to promote education in their local communities. In most regions of Northern Pakistan, PTCs are usually comprised of five to seven male community members12 and often include the head teacher and parents. PTC members are elected by parents through a transparent and fair process that is typically facilitated at the school or community meeting place.13 The PTC members are responsible for overall school management, access to education and the quality of education at primary and secondary schools. SMC members are often regarded as leaders within the community. One of the challenges in traditional, conservative communities in some parts of Pakistan is that PTCs are composed only of male parents, as cultural norms make it impossible for women to participate in an official capacity. To address this gender imbalance, which is particularly important for ensuring the enrollment and attendance of girls, CRS has created parallel MGs that provide a venue for mothers to learn and talk about education in their communities. CRS then links MGs and PTCs to ensure that the voices of women are heard regarding education in the community. These linkages are fostered by ensuring that at least two members of each MG have male family members (brothers

12 In Northern Pakistan, PTC members must be male. In other regions of Pakistan, PTC members may be female.

13 As per Pakistani Law, PTC reformation/activation requires that at least 25% of parents from the community be present during the elections and initial meeting.

or spouses) who are active members of the PTCs. Through these channels, MG members can compile their thoughts and share them with PTC members.

PTC members developing a school development plan/action plan following their exposure visit. Photo credit: CRS Besham Staff

Working with both PTCs and MGs is a way to change attitudes and practices within communities. Three phases, which serve the dual purpose of increasing the value communities place on education and promoting education, are recommended when building the capacity of PTCs and MGs to manage and promote education:

PHASE 1: Form or reactivate PTCs through a community-based process that ensures proper representation and understanding of roles and responsibilities

PHASE 2: Engage PTCs and community members in key education promotion activities to encourage community acceptance and support of formal education

PHASE 3: Facilitate the formation of mothers' groups to complement the PTCs with the voices and concerns of women

II. Phase 1: Form or reactivate PTCs through a community-based process that ensures proper representation and understanding of roles and responsibilities

PTCs are typically government-mandated bodies that, in theory, should promote and ensure quality education in their communities. However, many times they are inactive or do not even exist, and those that do exist often lack the proper training and support to be effective advocates for education. By supporting the existing system by forming or reactivating PTCs and then providing them with the information and training to be effective, education projects can enforce durable local structures that will support and manage education activities long after the completion of a single project.

Step 1: Form/Re-activate PTCs

The proper constitution of the PTC through equitable, transparent processes in forming the group will ensure its legitimacy and success. Prior to any meetings, it is advisable for NGO staff to obtain and comply with the relevant education department guidelines from the Department of Education for reactivating or forming PTCs. Once ready to start initial community meetings, the following measures should be considered: ensure the majority of parents are

present for the meeting to form or reactivate PTCs; hold the PTC formation or reactivation meeting in a neutral site (undisputed), where all community members can come without any hesitation or reluctance; follow government procedures for electing PTC members based on the criteria for representative participation; and consult government guidelines for PTCs' structure, role and responsibilities, and share this information with the whole community.

Step 2: Preparing for the Training of PTC Members

PTC training is offered to all PTC Members (five to seven people) and is usually facilitated at the community level, although sometimes a cluster approach is employed for PTC training purposes. Proper preparation for training activities ensures an effective learning environment and higher-quality learning. Prior to developing any new training materials - manuals, guidelines, or resources—NGO staff should first verify with government authorities and national teacher associations what resources already exist. Whenever possible, NGO-developed resources should complement government efforts. The PTC training manual should be developed using the already-established government guidelines. It is advisable that all relevant NGO staff first be trained on the PTC guidelines. The selected trainer(s) should have excellent facilitation and writing skills and a proven ability to develop applicable training modules. S/he should be intimately familiar with the local language and culture. Consider also that a team of two trainers can help the process to run more smoothly than perhaps just one.

It may work best for NGO representatives and active PTC members to collaborate regarding training logistics. For this, consider the following list of organizing tips:

- Use a cluster approach (combining several PTCs from nearby communities) to save time, enhance group work and discussion
- Conduct a rapid needs assessment of the PTCs capacities and areas for improvement and tailor the needs training accordingly
- Select a centrally-located venue
- Set training timings according to PTC members' schedules
- Finalize the date, time, and venue for PTC training
- Invite participants at least two weeks prior to the actual training
- Reconfirm participation one day prior to the actual training
- Ensure participation of PTC members by properly communicating the training dates and time and selecting a convenient venue (after approving with the DoE)
- If training is to be conducted in a remote area, plan to stay overnight as it saves time and improves coordination with PTC members
- Regarding non-PTC member participants, be sure to invite local religious leader(s) to the training
- Invite government officials to the training to begin creating of linkages between PTCs and DoE and to ensure clarity regarding their different responsibilities.

Step 3: Training PTCs on their roles and responsibilities

PTC members developing an action plan for their school following exposure visit. Photo credit: CRS Besham Staff

Training PTC members on their roles and responsibilities and providing them with the skills to fulfil these responsibilities supports sustainability. Begin the training with a formal welcome and allow for the appropriate religious introductory and welcome traditions. Refer to key religious messages appropriately and in the education context. Also, consider that the use of local language brings more clarity and understanding to the participants. In general, it is the responsibility of the facilitator(s) and other NGO representatives to adopt culturally appropriate practices to help establish mutual respect and understanding among NGO staff and community members.

The following is an example of the topics covered during a PTC capacity building training in Pakistan:

- Introduction to the PTC; PTC Composition; PTC constitution procedures
- PTC's Responsibilities: Administrative, Developmental, and Financial responsibilities
- Roles and Responsibilities: Chairperson, Secretary, School officers, and Education Department
- PTC Meetings and Agendas: Instructions for written messages to convene meetings and record-keeping
- PTC Financial Management: Income/Cash Book Recordkeeping; PTC income and expenditure summary account; stock register; financial reforms; fundraising opportunities
- PTC Record-keeping: Register to repair and maintain school infrastructure
- PTC Planning: Introduction to School Development Plan (SDP); How to Develop SDP; Sample SDP
- Discussions: What does quality education look like in our community?
- Community mapping: stakeholder analysis; growth/support opportunities

Quick Tips for building a strong working relationship with PTCs

- Provide proper guidelines and frequently use education promotion messages for mobilization so that PTCs play a proactive role in education promotion
- Help PTCs establish linkages with the Department of Education
- Respond promptly to any request for cooperation/support from PTCs
- Remain impartial and play the role of mediator if any conflict arises among PTC members
- Always respect the views, thoughts, suggestion, cultural values and traditions of PTCs
- Provide PTCs with ideas/examples on potential ways to raise funds for school development and education promotion activities
- Assist PTCs with bank registration and account opening
- Work with PTC members collectively not individually
- Ensure sessions with PTCs do not conflict with times of religious observance to avoid any religious impression
- In culturally conservative communities, there may be sensitivity to visits by female staff—visits may be more effective and constructive if community approval is received prior to the visit

Important Tip for Implementing Phase 1: *A foundation of trust with a community is important to PTC participation. For example, CRS/Pakistan found that in communities where CRS was already known through other interventions, community members were less hesitant to participate in PTCs. Do not rush the PTC formation process. Properly elected PTCs proved more active and participatory and took more ownership of responsibilities, emphasizing the need to carefully monitor the formation or reactivation of PTCs.*

II. Phase 2: Engage PTCs and community members in key education promotion activities to encourage community acceptance and support of formal education

Engaging PTCs and community members in various education promotion activities allows them to see the positive aspects of education, with the goal being to increase both male and female student enrollment and attendance. Key activities used and found to be promising include exposure visits and community-based education promotion events.

> *"Exposure visits... provide tangible motivation for participants to value education."*

A) Exposure Visits

Exposure visits, as described in the first section, provide tangible motivation for participants[14] to value education. These visits are strengthened by proper planning and strong coordination with host communities and education department official(s). Effective exposure visits showcase impressive host community achievements that help mobilize PTC members and education department officials to replicate the same in their respective districts.

Step 1: Preparing for the exposure visit

Prior to the exposure visit, it helps if NGO management identifies appropriate program staff to facilitate the exposure visit. For participant selection from targeted communities, consider including a demographic cross-section of the PTC and community, approximately four PTC members (teachers and PTC members) and at least one religious leader per community plus one or two education department officials; consider the age and health of participants to ensure they are fit for travel; consider birthplace and/or attitude of individuals to avoid problems during the visit. For example, in Pakistan it can be sometimes unsafe for a person from a particular ethnic group or religious sect to travel in some areas. The purpose of the exposure visit—to be exposed to the host community's education achievements and to return with new ideas, motivations, and strategies for strengthening education promotion/services in their own communities—needs to be shared clearly with all participants. * *See "IPP2, Part 1" for additional guidance.* NGO members and field staff are encouraged to suggest that exposure visit participants host a community and/or key stakeholder meeting upon returning to their village to report on their experience and share ideas for education promotion.

Prior to the visit, NGO representatives and partner staff should visit the selected site(s) and work with community leaders to design the visit agenda. It is important to be very clear and

14 In the case of Northern Pakistan, exposure visits are usually limited to male participants due to religious practices which restrict women's movement to other communities. That said, we would encourage women's participation in these visits if/when appropriate.

Teachers, PTC members, and religious leaders participating in an enrollment walk in Butyal, Shangla District. Photo Credit: CRS Besham Staff

deliberate about what activities/observations will be included in the exposure visit. Each activity should be identified, the desired goal of the activity clearly discussed with the host community, and a list of discussion questions prepared to facilitate dialogue between the host community and visitors. Assign a point person to each activity to act as the community representative to field questions and formally present the activity to the visitors. Always allow plenty of time in the schedule for participants to ask questions within the larger group or through smaller, informal conversations.

NGO representatives should coordinate exposure visits formally with the local DoE who should provide an official invitation to ensure consent for teachers' availability and district-level officials' participation during exposure visit. Including teachers and district-level officials is essential to developing links between the community and the district level. These visits also offer a good opportunity for both sides to understand each other's views, thoughts, and vision about education. As for logistics, develop a visit plan inclusive of travel times, stays, meetings, visits, etc. and share the plan and objective of the visit with the respective focal person of the identified host community, education department, and NGO. Reconfirm participation in advance of the trip and make logistic arrangements for the exposure visit, including accommodations, food/refreshments, vehicle(s) and driver selection. It is strongly advisable for NGO staff to conduct a "pre-visit" to the host community to visit the community, education department and any other organizations promoting education to prepare them for the visit by sharing the project agenda and objectives as well as discussing the best ways in which to highlight their successes for the

visitors. Provide a briefing to stakeholders to foster an understanding about the purpose and importance of the visit and to discuss any concerns in advance of the visit.

Step 2: During exposure visits

Visitors observing the classroom environment at Chatorkhun Primary School as part of an exposure visit.
Photo credit: CRS Besham Staff

Visits should offer participants a chance to see a 'model' community, which is promoting education and experiencing benefits. It is best to depart and return on time, and to generally be very attentive to participants' needs. While in the community, it is advisable that NGO staff facilitate meetings to share experiences with other key stakeholders, such as other school management committees/ parent-teacher councils, community members, education officials, and other NGOs working in the education sector. The agenda should also allow for visits to the community's school(s) to observe classroom management and arrangement, and the use of different teaching aids and approaches—as well as sufficient time for prayer or other religious observance throughout the trip to ensure a positive experience for all participants. At the end of the trip, NGO staff can encourage (and/or facilitate, as appropriate) a meeting among participants to sit together and develop an action plan based on their experiences and findings from the exposure visit. This plan should be incorporated into their School Development Plan/ Education Promotion Plan (SDP/EPP) after discussion in their communities.

Step 3: After visits

Follow-up after the exposure visits is an often-neglected aspect of this type of community education promotion activity. Following exposure visits, it is important to provide support to the community to put the good practices into action once they return home. De-briefing sessions should be held by participants in their respective communities following the trip to share their experiences with all PTC members and other community members. Discussions should include opportunities for PTC members to share successes and lessons learned. Record minutes of the debriefing meeting into the meeting register, and later follow up on the action plan created at the end of the exposure visit at the community level.

Important Tip: Exchange visits *with large groups are more difficult to manage and can become a security concern—so limit the number of participants accordingly. Also, visiting communities with similar geography and economic status is important as it shows participants that other communities which face similar challenges have succeeded in making education a priority.*

B) Education Promotion Events

Community-based education promotion events such as enrollment walks, quiz competitions, and debates foster pride among children and parents and motivate community members to support education. Education promotion events strengthen the links among the implementing NGO, religious leaders, parents, teachers, and government, as they provide a forum for different stakeholders to get together, discuss different challenges and find suitable solutions. School-level events create an opportunity for parents to visit the school, create a relationship with the teacher(s) and take ownership of the school's positive elements as well as their child's performance. Co-curricular events enhance students' life skills (e.g. creativity, expression, problem-solving, etc.) and self-confidence. Prize distribution during co-curricular activities creates a competitive environment, which can also increase parents' interest, as it becomes a matter of pride and honor when their child wins a competition and receives a prize.

Step 1: Preparing for Events

As part of the project, NGO and partner staff facilitate community-wide education promotion events in close collaboration with the PTC. As part of the PTC orientation/training program, NGO staff encourage PTC members to discuss and plan what types of events they would like to host during the academic year by defining the type of event(s) and the overall objective of each event (raising awareness about education, promoting learning, encouraging parents to send their daughters to school, etc.). The first event is then jointly planned by the PTC and NGO staff as a learning and capacity building opportunity. After the successful organization of an initial education promotion event, the planning of subsequent events is the responsibility of the PTC.

Preparation for events ensures strong community involvement and effective transmission of sensitization messages. Events may include a wide range of activities, depending on the community, such as quiz competitions, mobilization walks, art/poetry contests, etc. PTC members, with support from NGO staff, then work to coordinate with the DoE to encourage their participation and obtain permission to arrange education promotion events. NGO staff and PTC members can then jointly prepare a list of participants (parents, education officials and children) and plan the date, time, venue, guests, agenda, speech-givers, and seating chart. Participants should be invited formally, especially education department officials, as government offices typically have the tradition of requiring formal invitation letters to get consent from their hierarchy. Ideally, NGO staff will provide support to teachers and students in preparing for the events, particularly quiz competitions. It is also helpful for NGO staff to prepare banners in coordination with the PTC and to purchase prizes.

Step 2: During Events

Well-planned and executed events provide an opportunity for communities to learn more about education, show public support for education and feel pride in the achievements of their community to improve education—all of which will further encourage the enrolment of girls and boys. This is an important opportunity to display the key education sensitization messages on banners. NGO representatives and/or community leaders can begin with an introductory speech

including key education-related religious messages, which local religious leaders have used and identified, and subsequently share the objectives of the event with the community (either organization or PTC, if PTC organized the event). Each speech-giver (influential, religious, and education officials), as appropriate according to their level and the community attachment with them, should be invited formally to express their thoughts and other motivating remarks. Depending on the education promotion activity, the activity can be held/conducted before or after the speeches. For example, in the case of an enrollment walk, communities, and particularly community leaders, march together in a sign of solidarity with children for their education. For other activities, debates, or quiz competitions, it is recommended that awards be distributed; and that in general, refreshments be provided to participants.

Government teacher discussing a lesson with students at a primary school in Kohistan District. Photo credit: Jennifer Hardy/CRS

II.PP2 Important Tip: *Within the community,* ***education promotion events*** *are most effective when they involve education officials and religious leaders, because they attract more participation from other community members.*

SUCCESS STORY: BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO MANAGE AND PROMOTE EDUCATION IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

After having participated in CRS activities (PTC reactivation, exposure visits, roles and responsibilities training) in Kuz-Gabar, PTC members explained: *"Our PTC has developed a school development plan and practical steps have been taken such as hiring a Qari (religion teacher), corner meetings*[15] *with parents, contact with the local education department, repairs of the school building and a hygiene promotion campaign*." To increase enrollment and reduce absenteeism of teachers and students, the PTC has *"used different tools like door-to-door enrollment walks, messages to people in the light of the Quran and Hadith, and special speeches during Friday prayers through our mosque Imam*."

Some parents were reluctant to enroll their girls with the boys in the same school setting, so the community decided to construct an additional room for the girls. By bringing their request

15 "Corner meetings" are meetings that take place informally between local religious leaders and parents, usually within their neighborhood or part of the community. The religious leader hosts an informal meeting (proverbially on the corner) to discuss linkages between religion and education. Corner meetings are effective because they take place near people's homes and are often viewed as informal conversations as opposed to lectures/serious discussions.

to the local department of education, this village received an additional teacher for their school. They celebrated the additional room inauguration in the presence of the head of the local department of education, educated people of the community, and CRS. The head of the local education department revealed during his speech: *"Over the past 14 years, we have not seen a Grade 5 graduating from primary school in Kuz Gabar. However, I am now confident that I will see this very soon."*

II. Phase 3: Facilitate formation of mothers' groups to complement the PTCs with the voices and concerns of women

A female student using CRS-provided teaching aids to review the lesson with her classmates. Photo Credit: CRS Besham Staff

In areas where traditional values prevail regarding the role of women, women's ability to interact in society is sometimes limited to the point where they often cannot even leave their homes. Some traditional values require that girls stop going to school at or even before puberty (as early as age nine), a practice which results in a cycle of high illiteracy rates. This is certainly the case in rural Pakistan, where PTCs are meant to provide a voice to the community in decisions related to education but where women are often unable to participate, greatly limiting the ability for their voices to be heard. To provide a culturally appropriate mechanism for the participation of women, CRS has worked with local communities to create Mothers' Groups (MGs). These groups are meant to supplement the PTCs with the voice of women and to motivate women to facilitate and encourage the education of their children. MGs are linked with the PTCs—generally through a married couple or a man and woman from the same family—so that women's opinions and concerns can also be shared.

Step 1: Before working with MGs

MGs offer a unique opportunity to ensure that the voices of women are considered in the education program in spite of cultural limitations. However, this process is not easy and choosing to employ this approach requires continually assessing community acceptance and opinions and adjusting the approach as needed.

The first step is for NGO staff to clarify MG guidelines including MG membership selection criteria, which are suggested by the NGO but agreed upon by a few female leaders in the community when possible. In culturally conservative environments, it is strongly advisable to build trust by coordinating with male community members before female staff interact

directly with women from the targeted village/community. This can be done through an orientation meeting by male staff with men from the target community. NGO staff together with community members may consult the school register to locate children's households to cluster households into MGs. In one village, there may be more than one MG based on population density. CRS Pakistan has found that to be effective, it requires ten households to make MG formation feasible; the maximum number depends on the accessibility, community demography, and social structure of all households in the community. Each MG should have six to ten members. Clustering targeted communities according to their kinship and proximity is useful for the women, because they tend to feel more comfortable working in areas close to their homes with women they know.

Staff with whom women will feel comfortable (in the case of the Pakistan project area for example, only female staff) can then conduct orientation and introductory meetings in clusters to familiarize women with the idea of MGs and the formation process. Meetings also provide a key opportunity for sensitization on the importance of mothers in children's education and the important role of MGs in promoting education and overall child development and wellbeing. Finalize the date, venue, and time for MG formation meeting and identify at least two women with a close family relationship to a male member(s) of the PTC who could act as liaisons to share information with the PTC. Remember: build trust with male community members first. This reduces cultural constraints and ensures that women feel free to participate. Women are less hesitant to participate if male community members have no objection to their participation in MG meetings.

Step 2: Working with MGs

Once MGs have been established in the community, they offer a unique venue to both educate women about education and to engage them to include children, especially girl children, in education in their communities. So that messages will be shared within the wider community, it is recommended that NGO staff ensure that at least 70% of the households in each cluster are present at the MG formation meeting by having PTC and influential community members invite them. Explain in detail the roles and responsibilities of the MG to all the participants, and subsequently invite nominations from the women for MG membership. It is often suggested to limit membership to a manageable number of women (no more than 20 mothers) for discussion purposes. Experience illustrates that when MGs are too large, the ability to host open conversations and foster a safe space becomes more difficult. As such, to ensure that all women who are interested in participating in MGs are able to do so, some communities form more than one MG. These are usually based on geographic location within the community. Once consensus has been developed among all the women who participated in the meeting, the names of the selected MG members should be announced loudly and clearly so that all the mothers who are present can identify and remember MG members. For the documentation of names of the MG members, if cultural constraints exist that make it difficult to register names, use a locally appropriate alternative (e.g. Sister of __, or Mother of __, etc. and respect the maintenance of this record by female staff only).

> *"The goal of each session is . . . to strengthen their understanding of the invaluable role mothers play in supporting their children's education and growth."*

At each MG meeting, which in most communities occur on a monthly basis (subject to the MG's decision), it works well when the facilitator focuses on and explains in detail one key message related to education. Meeting themes are divergent and can include everything from discussions on children's hygiene, to the economic benefits of literacy and numeracy, to why education matters. The goal of each session is to not only raise mothers' awareness about the importance of education but also to strengthen their understanding of the invaluable role mothers play in supporting their children's education and growth. At subsequent meetings, follow up on the previous message to ensure the message is understood. Gradually increase the number of messages for each meeting and also provide different stories, examples, and/or storyboards[16] during each meeting to highlight the significance of the education messages. This reinforcement approach is important, especially if target women are illiterate, making printed materials inappropriate. It is important to encourage and motivate women to further disseminate these key messages to other women in the community. Furthermore, during school events, key messages should be shared and follow-up discussions can be held regarding previously disseminated messages. For motivation, different prizes may be distributed for accurate recitation of key messages by the women and message dissemination materials for distribution to other women. One of the most important aspects of this initiative is to encourage women's input on the matter of education, so it is critical that NGO staff provide plenty of opportunities during the discussions for the women to share their thoughts, learning, experiences and different case studies related to education from their experience.

II.PP3 Important Tip: Forming MGs *is a very slow process that requires a lot of patience and commitment. Visits need to be well structured and highly efficient to make the most of the women's time, especially since cultural norms prefer that women limit their movement. Communicating with the women through their children may be effective when/where direct contact is not possible.*

16 Storyboards use pictures to illustrate a concept or abstract idea. In the case of Pakistan, female staff have used story boards illustrating the differences between educated and non-educated girls (i.e., better health, ability to do simple math, future careers, etc.) during MG meetings as a means of cultivating discussion around various education messages.

SUCCESS STORY: BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO MANAGE AND PROMOTE EDUCATION IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

In the village of Besham, with over 200 households, only 56 girls were enrolled in the primary school and the attendance hovered around 35%. Many girls were involved in domestic activities, as their mothers were not aware of the importance of their daughters' education and did not know what role they could play in their children's education. Strict cultural norms and values prohibited many mothers from serving as PTC members and contributing to their children's education in Shangla and Kohistan districts of northern Pakistan.

The MG formation and training led to important changes within this community for girls' education. One woman named Taha decided to enroll her 10-year-old daughter, who had previously dropped out, and ensured that she attended regularly. Another woman shared, "I have stopped using corporal punishment with my daughters after learning about child rights and psychology in the CRS training." Mothers in general started paying more attention to their children's education. A local schoolteacher said, "It's the first time that the girls are regularly completing their homework." With extensive mobilization, MG members are now also attending their meetings consistently, and during their meetings they have raised important issues for improvements in the learning environment. For example, the MG highlighted the need for a boundary wall for the school; this was subsequently built with the help of CRS. Now the female teacher and girls feel more secure and comfortable in school. The MG also communicated to the PTC the need for an additional gate and a latrine facility for the girl students. As a result, PTC members discussed these recommendations and decided to use PTC funds to build the structures.

III. HOW TO ENSURE NECESSARY LINKAGES BETWEEN GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION: Involving government officials is essential to ensure both sustainability of educational gains and conformity with local standards and guidelines. Involving government officials in a more inclusive manner to stimulate action and to link government officials and local community structures will create benefits that last long beyond a specific project.

Department of Education Officials and community leaders affirming that they will promote education within their community following an enrollment walk in Butyal Villege, Shangla District.
Photo credit: CRS Besham Staff

In Pakistan, the education department and communities are generally uncoordinated causing children's education to suffer, affecting the functionality of schools, and reducing teachers' and students' attendance. In CRS/Pakistan's experience, linking education department officials and communities has improved school functionality as well as teacher and student attendance in the schools. For example, CRS developed a joint monitoring plan and implemented joint monitoring visits with the education officials. As a result, the education officials have taken a greater interest in monitoring, and have approached CRS asking for additional monitoring trips. The involvement of education officials in exposure visits, teacher trainings, PTC trainings, and education promotion campaigns developed close coordination among education department officials, CRS, and communities which leads to sustainability. Now PTCs are communicating their needs directly to the education officials to retain good teachers and advocate for materials. The education officials are taking an interest in education promotion activities that the communities arrange even without CRS' support. And with increasing frequency, education officials are facilitating the formation or reactivation of PTCs with the communities.

Two phases are recommended when creating linkages between existing government structures and institutions and communities:

PHASE 1: Facilitate the monitoring of schools by Department of Education officials to improve coordination with communities and ensure quality education

PHASE 2: Support the improvement of linkages between existing government bodies and PTCs (to ensure better communication regarding school management and promotion of education)

III. Phase 1: Facilitate the monitoring of schools by Department of Education officials to improve community coordination and ensure quality education

DoE officials, PTC members, and CRS staff conducting a meeting at Government Primary School Lelai, Shangla District. Photo credit: Jennifer Hardy/CRS

Government monitoring of schools is important for assuring the quality of education available to students. Monitoring visits help to establish a direct link between PTCs, teachers, students, and DoE to assist in resolving problems and concerns. Secondly, monitoring visits encourage regular teacher attendance and a higher level of professionalism and adherence to standards by teachers. The outcome of these activities is higher-quality teaching and increased interest in education from parents. However, officials often lack the basic logistical support necessary to ensure monitoring. To address this, CRS works in close coordination with DoE staff and supports joint monitoring trips to targeted communities.

Step 1: Working with the Department of Education

Engaging the Department of Education (DoE) will provide additional support to project activities and also support sustainable improvements in the quality of teaching and community involvement in education. The process may begin as an official meeting between NGO representatives and education department officials to learn about their existing monitoring mechanisms and problems faced in conducting monitoring visits to schools. The initiation of this relationship then better places NGO staff to communicate formally (through a written letter) with the district-level education departments to offer monitoring visits and also in developing a joint monitoring plan. When developing a joint monitoring plan for visits to targeted schools, it is essential that NGOs are flexible in scheduling to encourage and facilitate DoE engagement and to not interfere with government work or decision-making processes before or during monitoring visits. After the NGO has obtained formal approval of the joint monitoring plan from high-level district officers, it is a good practice to share one copy of the monitoring visit plan with the concerned officials and inform officials regularly regarding joint visit dates and times. During visits, NGO representatives may suggest different options to the officials for addressing issues that arise. These suggestions should encourage officials to focus on constructive capacity-building approaches rather than on strict disciplinary actions against teachers.

***III.PP1 Important Tip**: NGOs also have to address resentment from teachers occasionally, related to the **increased monitoring by education department officials** and increased demands placed on teachers to properly perform their duties. With time and close accompaniment of teachers, these feelings tend to dissipate particularly as teachers begin to receive positive benefits (increased support) from the monitoring visits.*

III. Phase 2: Support stronger links between existing government bodies and PTCs to ensure better communication on school management and education promotion

Linking PTCs and local government increases accountability, transparency, and ultimately results in high-quality education. Developing these linkages is also a way to ensure ongoing support for communities after a project ends.

Step 1: Working with the Department of Education

Working with the DoE ensures ongoing support for communities and PTCs long after the end of a particular project. To start the process, it will be helpful for NGO staff to be fully aware of which PTCs will need reactivation and which need to be formed from the start. Obtaining a list regarding existing PTCs for reactivation from the concerned DoE officials is likely to be the best first step, followed by obtaining the official guidelines from DoE officials for reactivating and forming PTCs to guide the process. NGO staff then need to work closely to educate each PTC on the roles and responsibilities of its members. This discussion includes hosting dialogues about the role of the government and stressing that PTCs should visit (and in many areas are required to visit) education department officials throughout the academic year to discuss education-related issues and provide feedback on the needs of their school/community.

Ensuring PTC members' awareness of their roles and responsibilities adds to the credibility and respect DoE officials have for PTCs and cultivates a more collaborative environment.. NGO staff can also help the PTCs' coordinate with the DoE by encouraging relevant officials to set a time for meetings so that PTCs can share school-related issues with them.

Religious leaders providing a prize to a high-performing student during an awards ceremony. Photo credit: CRS Besham Staff

Building a relationship between NGO staff and DoE officials is an ongoing process to be fostered. As such, it is important to keep the DoE (especially local DoE staff who are responsible for follow-up) up-to-date about changes, such as newly activated PTCs. Relevant DoE officials should be invited to and involved in all school-level events (enrollment walks, inauguration, and other activities) organized by the PTC and facilitated by the NGO. Also, it is a very useful practice to include PTC members on all monitoring visits to their respective schools so that all PTC members have a chance

to meet with the DoE officials directly and to better understand concerns raised during monitoring trips. Regular reflection workshops with all PTC members and officials from the DoE to share best practices, experiences, progress, achievements, and issues can also help to strengthen this relationship.

III.PP2 Important Tip: *PTCs formed in accordance with government guidelines encourage more effective linkages with the local DoE. Commitments made by DoE officials during meetings with the PTC help to ensure regular follow- up between the two bodies. In the long run, this has been shown to ensure that PTCs are more sustainable and capable of independent decision-making.*

SUCCESS STORY: ENSURING NECESSARY LINKAGES BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES

Teacher absenteeism is among the major reasons for low enrollment and attendance in Kohistan and Shangla. Monitoring is weak due to limited interest, hilly and difficult-to-traverse terrain and a lack of transportation. In this context, CRS has found participatory school monitoring to be a very effective tool for helping to improve education quality. As part of this system, education department monitoring officials and CRS representatives prepared monthly joint monitoring plans. PTCs were also actively involved in those visits, to further strengthen their linkages with the education department. The collaboration between these key stakeholders allows for a constructive feedback mechanism. This has brought about a prominent change in attitude and behaviour by people at the community and institutional levels, as described by a high-level education department official who said, *"The participatory monitoring approach has improved teachers' attendance and lends a hand in accelerating students' attendance and enrolment. PTC provides full support to the department and has reduced our workload, which is a very sustainable approach."*

The approach has great potential for broader impact outside of the project area. Another official shared that he is replicating this monitoring approach by focusing on the PTC and education department monitoring collaboration in additional villages within his jurisdiction outside of those targeted by CRS.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Based on the CRS/Pakistan experience, the following are key challenges to promoting education in a culturally conservative environment where there is not a tradition of prioritizing formal education by parents, community leaders, and the larger community:

CHALLENGE: How do you successfully access and engage female beneficiaries in an environment where there is distrust of female NGO staff? Shangla and Kohistan are very conservative areas that practice a strong form of purdah. Although CRS/Pakistan proceeds slowly and cautiously to obtain permission for female staff to work with local women to form

MGs, sometimes even after permission has been obtained, the arrival of female staff (even when arranged in advance) can create conflict among community members.

A young student at a Government Girls' Primary School uses learning aids to practice a lesson with her classmates in Kohistan District. Photo credit: Jennifer Hardy/CRS

RECOMMENDATION: Build trust by coordinating with male community members before female staff interact directly with women from the targeted community, for example by holding an orientation meeting by male staff with men from the target community. Female staff should also be aware of any cultural nuances they must follow in each community prior to engaging with community members. When men and women respect local cultural practices there tends to be a better chance of acceptance among local community leaders and openness to work together.

CHALLENGE: How do you accurately and effectively develop and disseminate key religious messages? Religious messages are considered very sensitive. Any mistake or error in a text could be considered or propagated as an intentional change, which could result in serious problems for the project, staff, and organization.

Recommendation: Key messages should be verified from qualified and prominent religious leaders, before and after printing. If these are translated, then there should be proper reference of the person (name of the religious leader) who has translated the messages.

CHALLENGE: Without a functioning PTC and no community member having ever had any PTC experience, what foundation or platform is there to start PTC activities? PTCs are the government mandatory body in KPK, but they mostly remained inactive and only exist in documents. When they are inactive, there is no coordination in the community and nobody takes responsibility for education. Without a PTC it is difficult to start activities, as this is a key platform to address education issues in the village.

RECOMMENDATION: First, go to the communities and meet with and sensitize the teacher(s), gaining their confidence. They are influential, and their support is important. Next, meet with the members of the community, informing them that the Government mandates the PTC. Sensitize and mobilize the community about the role of the PTC through a series of meetings. Finally, mobilize the teacher and community members to hold a grand meeting to discuss the PTC. During the meeting, in a democratic and transparent fashion, form a committee that is truly representative of the various hamlets and sub-groups in the area.

CHALLENGE: How do you deal with opposition from teachers? The community's teacher may be well off compared to the rest of the community. It is even possible that school funds were used inappropriately by teachers. Some teachers are well connected with government

A teacher at a Government Girls' Primary School in Kohistan District assists students with their assignment. Photo credit: Jennifer Hardy/CRS

officials and have significant influence, particularly over the education system in the community. Furthermore, because the teacher is educated and often a prominent member of the community, s/he is highly trusted. In this context, the teacher may be reluctant to cooperate as cooperation may influence the power balance between teacher and parents.

RECOMMENDATION: Gain the teacher's confidence through meetings and the support of the education department. Do not address any specific previous misappropriations or missing funds that might exist. Rather, encourage the teacher to participate fully. Focus on the opportunity to improve the education system in the area. Continue to train the teachers and maintain a good relationship with them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional resources to support the practical implementation of the Promising Practices: Please note that more detail regarding each step, including checklists, various worksheet samples, and workshop facilitation guide(s) used in the CRS Pakistan "Building on Traditional Values to Enrol Primary School Children" project are available. If you are interested, please request a copy of the CRS/Pakistan Education Promotion Toolkit from the CRS/Pakistan Country Program. Specifically, following resources are available as part of the toolkit:

- Guide to Community Selection/Targeting
- Sample Quranic Messages identified by Religious Leaders
- Sample Exposure Visit Plan
- PTC Roles and Responsibilities
- Guidelines for PTC Capacity Building
- PTC Training Manual / Facilitation Guide
- Mothers' Group Formation Guidelines
- Mothers' Group Workshop Manual/Facilitation Guide