Consensus Document

Building a National Consensus for Assessment of Foundational Learning in Pakistan
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A two day consultation (May 31 – June 1, 2023) was held in Islamabad, co-hosted by the Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE)/Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Federal Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education (FBISE) & Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)

The purpose was to build a National Consensus on Assessment of Foundational Learning in Pakistan. It was attended by 55 high level stakeholders and assessment experts of the government, academia, CSOs and development partners. The champions included: Ms. Mehnaz Akbar Aziz (MNA), Parliamentary Secretary for Law and Justice Ministry, Convenor Parliamentary Caucus of Child Rights & Global Co-Chair IPNed; Mr. Waseem Ajmal, Secretary Education, Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson National Commission on Rights of the Child (NCRC), Mr. Qaiser Alam, Chairperson, FBISE, Mr. Rahman Shah, Secretary Education Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Dr. Mariam Chughtai, Director National Curriculum Council (NCC), Mr. Sajjad Khan, Additional Secretary (Education), Chief Secretary Secretariat, GB, Mr. Piaro Khan, Director, Directorate of Curriculum, Assessment & Research (DCAR) Jamshoro SELD, Govt of Sindh, Dr. Muhammad Shahid Soroya, DG Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE), Mr. Nasir Mehmood, Punjab Examination Commission (PEC), Mr. Khawaja Mazhar-ul-Haque, Deputy Secretary, School Education Department (SED), South Punjab, Dr. Nasreen Bano JEA MoFE&PT, Dr. Afshan Huma AIOU, online representatives from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, South-South Fellows, Mr. Abid Gill, JICA, Ms. Humera Jamil, VSO; Experts from the Sindh Education Foundation (SEF), The Citizens’ Foundation (TCF), Taleemabad, Tabadlab, PAMs, Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE), FCDO, the World Bank, Baela Jamil and ASER/ South -South Team ITA.

Cognizant of the growing momentum nationally and globally to secure Foundational Learning (FL) for all children up to grade 3, the High-Level panel endorsed the urgency for adopting a critical focus on FL in Pakistan as a basic building block for equitable and lifelong learning.

Acknowledging the Call to Action for Foundational Learning at the Transforming Education Summit (TES) 2022, endorsed by the MoFE&PT, Provincial Departments and CSOs

Recognizing opportunities for mobilizing nationwide public opinion for crafting a policy on Foundational Learning (Literacy and Numeracy), the participants marched towards a national consensus on the assessment for FL competencies up to grade 2/3 level.

Concurring that whilst government, academics, NGOs, INGOs and development partners are engaged in assessing FL up to grade 3 level, it is imperative to have a common national tool for the “Assessment of Foundational Learning” in Pakistan.

The Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MoFE&PT) and the Departments of Education/School Education & Literacy across provinces and areas of Pakistan have spearheaded the inclusion of Foundational Literacy (FL) in the Actions to Strengthen Performance for Inclusive and Responsive Education Program (ASPIRE), a national program (US $ 200 million) with the World Bank where a recent addition has been made in for Foundational Literacy(annex). ASPIRE includes, policy, measurement of, and actions for improving Foundational Literacy in Pakistan’s lagging districts.
Foundational Learning in Pakistan is emerging as a movement and a high priority investment for stemming growing learning poverty (79%) and persistent low learning levels (ASER Pakistan)

All stakeholders after reviewing seven tools and multiple initiatives underway across Pakistan on measuring Foundational Learning, jointly endorsed the Call to Action for a National Consensus on Assessment of Foundational Learning

1. Defining Statements of Solidarity on Foundational Learning & National Assessment

   “Today the Learning Crisis is a national calamity for child rights, it must be addressed as Pakistan’s primary challenge first and foremost as the responsibility of the State (all provinces and areas) and not be diluted as a provincial crisis only” Mehnaz Akbar Aziz MNA/Convenor Child Rights Caucus

   “We, the Govt. of Pakistan signed the Call to Action on Foundational Learning at the “Transforming Education Summit” 2022; we thus stand by that commitment supporting the spectrum of early years and lower primary grades up to grades 2/3 in the country (3-8 years); this two day consultation will garner attention and energy for the fundamental principles and actions for Foundational Learning in Pakistan; the outcomes of this consultation will feed into the National Conference on Foundational Learning and Early Years on June 21-22, 2023” Mr. Waseem Ajmal Federal Secretary MoFE&PT

   “Foundational Learning is an imperative for all children inclusively, embracing CWDs, refugees and children in emergencies, the entitlement needs an actionable resolve to “Assess it, Diagnose it and Cure it!” Ms. Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson NCRC.

   “The work of Assessment bodies like FBISE is incomplete without actively engaging with FL; we are committed to a closer partnership with the FL assessment and learning movement” Mr. Qaisar Alam Chairman FBISE.

2. Experts deliberated, reviewed FL tools in use in the country and agreed that **foundational learning is and must be the key area of focus in Pakistan for meeting and sustaining the targets for 25 A and SDG 4 inclusively for all children across diverse contexts**; hitherto FL has been excluded from high stakes assessments across schools and education systems.

3. The Coalition formed under the South-South Program (Pakistan-Brazil and Kenya) of 30 Pakistani fellows (16 Govt./14 non-govt.) committed to What Works for FL welcomes the expanded coalition in Pakistan to build momentum for Foundational Learning, the creation and accessibility of a common assessment tool as a public good for All.

4. The MoFE&PT is resolute to uphold FL for actions and outcomes; it has taken the following steps:

   - Seizing the opportunity to restructure the ASPIRE programme funded by the World Bank, foundational literacy has been added as a DLI to reflect the urgency of action for 3-8 years children across Pakistan
   - Embarking on a new programme on ECE (Rs. 700 million) targeting 200-250 schools in ICT for provision of ECE classrooms, specialized and competent ECE teaching staff.
   - Federal govt is finalizing the legislation to support CWDs (dyslexia/ADHD) with provisions for assessment, diagnostics and learning instruction support.
5. All provinces/areas must commit to targets in education sector plans to address foundational learning in child friendly and safe learning environment conducive to learning in both public and private schools.

6. Provincial/areas legislation on 25 A right to education must include ECE; three out of five provincial/area laws uphold ECE; all laws to integrate early years support for FL

7. The National Curriculum Council (NCC) commits to play a role to include FL in inter-provincial working groups; NCC will work with the provinces to jointly examine how the sections on SLOs/Benchmarks, making of learning materials, textbooks, teachers training and assessment must integrate the FL recommendations actively.

8. FL can be supported in Community libraries where parents are provided access to books, smart screens/tablets for their active understanding and engagement in literacy and numeracy.

9. There is an urgency to establish a dedicated unit within the Ministry/Depts of Education/Literacy on Foundational Learning to onboard experts and key stakeholders including teachers/Headteachers, field officers providing inputs to Content, Pedagogy, Assessment, Research, Innovations and Systems for improved learning outcomes in Pakistan by 2030.

10. Representation, Action/Expression and Engagement as core principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are critical criteria for defining assessment tools of FL to address inclusion and diversity for the most vulnerable groups including CWDs, refugees and children in emergencies.

11. The National Coalition for FL is formally expanded to include experts on Assessment supported by PIE/MoFE&PT, FBISE, DCAR/Sindh, PEC/Punjab; Elementary Board of Assessment GB; BEAC/Balochistan and Directorate of Curriculum & Education (DCTE), KP, Education Foundations, Academia and CSOs, for technical support and vital National Task for assessment, capacity building and successful implementation of Foundational Learning in Pakistan.

Pakistan welcomes support from Development Partners, Global Foundations and INGOs for FL in Pakistan as Coalition Partners.

FCDO, World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), JICA, VSO.

Endorsed by All Participants at the Two-Day National Consultation

June 1, 2023
Names of the South South Fellows in Attendance

- Mr. Waseem Ajmal, Secretary MoFE&PT
- Mr. Qaiser Alam, Chairman, FBISE
- Mr. Qaiser Rashid, Additional Secretary, SED, Punjab
- Ms. Saima Anwar, Senior Education Advisor, FCDO
- Ms. Baela Raza Jamil, CEO, ITA
- Ms. Hina Chowdhary, Section Officer, SED, South Punjab
- Mr. Umar Nadeem, Tabadlab
- Mr. Sikendar Bizenjo, Co Founder, BYAC
- Ms. Amna Javed Project Manager, ITA
Annex 1

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**Actions to Strengthen Performance for Inclusive and Responsive Education Program (ASPIRE)**

Govt of Pakistan & World Bank

Foundation Literacy Policies and Corresponding Budget Allocations

Parameters of policy and verification process:

1. The foundational literacy policy should include a working definition of foundational literacy (at a minimum include reading and target grades 1 to 3), a CPD policy and framework,
2. budgetary allocations for foundational learning and parameters for conducting summative, formative and diagnostic assessments for foundational literacy.

The policy must be notified by the respective education departments (each province can develop a policy separately or sign off on one policy).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Name</th>
<th>Intermediate Targets</th>
<th>End Target</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of an accelerated foundational literacy program in lagging areas/districts</td>
<td>DLI 13</td>
<td>Implementation of the Accelerated Foundational Literacy program in 20% of all primary schools for each of the lagging districts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>DLR 13: Notification of policy for foundational literacy (reading) in provinces to accelerate learning</td>
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**Budgeting**

- The program has been approved for restructuring along the following parameters
- Repurposing the funds linked to lapsed DLRs, DLI 10.1 and 10.2 for:
  - TA component: Addition of a technical assistance component to cover the costs of the project coordination unit, the independent verification agency and other relevant analytical work (USD 2 million)
  - Addition of DLI 13: Implementation of an accelerated foundational literacy program in lagging areas/districts (USD 10 million)
• Transformation of Year 3 target under DLI 12 into DLR 12.3: National diagnostic assessment implemented; results made available (USD 8 million)

• Inclusion of non-formal education departments as implementing agencies under ASPIRE for activities focused on out-of-school children for e.g., the Literacy department in Punjab and the Social Welfare Department in Balochistan

• Revision of a few indicators/targets’ language keeping in mind the evolving realities and feedback from the provinces

Rounds of Consultations and Endorsement

• All provinces (Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab) officially endorsed the proposal to include DLI 13 through response to a letter sent by MoFEPT earlier this year.

• Civil society organisations such as PAMS, ITA who work on foundational literacy were consulted and their feedback was reflected

• Development partners such as the World Bank, FCDO, JICA consulted

• Formally endorsed at the last technical steering committee meeting with federal and provincial secretaries, project directors in attendance (in May 2023)