

Global Action Week for Education: 2023

Achievements and Reflections



Decolonizing Education Financing



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**“Decolonizing Education
Financing”**

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Introduction

The Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) is a global campaign that aims to raise awareness and promote action on issues related to education. It was initiated by GCE (Global Campaign for Education) in 2000, and since then, it has been lobbying for the right to education, improving educational policies, and access to inclusive and equitable education. By raising awareness and mobilizing support, GAWE contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all by 2030. This year the campaign completed 20 years, and the theme of the week this year centred on “Decolonizing Education Financing”. Pakistan Coalition for Education (an initiative of SAQE) designed a campaign to commemorate the week and involved key education sector stakeholders from 12 districts nationwide; seven districts of Punjab, namely DG Khan, Hafizabad, Layyah, Khanewal, Muzaffargarh, Nankana, and Rajanpur. Two districts of Sindh i.e., Ghotki and Keamari; two of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa i.e., Swabi and Buner and the Federal Territory.




The primary goal of the campaign was to comprehensively document and highlight the diverse challenges concerning education financing at the grassroots level, with a special emphasis on examining disability inclusiveness and the gender responsiveness of budget allocation and expenditure mechanisms. Additionally, the campaign sought to instil a culture of social accountability within the local communities, empowering them to actively participate in decision-making processes and fostering a sense of responsibility and greater accountability among local authorities.

The campaign also serves as a crucial prerequisite for the Vote For Education campaign SAQE is spearheading, and the information gathered through the campaign has significantly contributed in capturing demands for education reforms at the grassroots level. The unwavering commitment and hard work of member organizations and PAGE (Peoples Action Groups for Education) members as well as the active involvement of Local Authorities at the district level fostered an environment of cooperation and collectivity which proved instrumental in the resounding progress of this campaign.

This report seeks to present a thorough discourse of the activities, key highlights, scope and effectiveness of the campaign in raising awareness and promoting action on educational financing and related challenges in Pakistan.

Objectives

Following were the objectives of the campaign:

-  To identify and address the key challenges and barriers in equitable education financing at the grassroots level.
-  To mainstream the problems faced by girls and marginalized groups in accessing quality education.
-  To inculcate the practices of social accountability among the people.

Activities

Three kinds of activities were conducted under this campaign, i.e.,

- 01 **Focus Group Discussions**
- 02 **Budget Tracking Activity**
- 03 **Banner Placing Activity**

Focus Group Discussions

Through the FGDs, representatives from the district educational departments, school management committees, PAGE members, members of CSOs, Parents and Teachers were engaged in meaningful dialogue and knowledge sharing. The discussions facilitated the exchange of ideas, experiences, and perspectives on challenges confronted by Pakistan regarding educational financing, which yielded some valuable recommendations which were furthered to the local administrative bodies. The representatives from the educational departments of respective districts made commitments to comply with the recommendations and consider them in the formulation of future policies.

Key Highlights (by District)



DG Khan

In DG Khan, Syed Muhammad Asif Naqvi, CEO Al-Eimman Development Foundation led the discussion. Sibtan Haider, AEO – Education Department and M Arham Khan, Deputy Director - Finance Department joined the discussion and a thorough discourse on the importance of quality education for girls took place. Additionally, the participants demanded an increase in the provincial budget for education in the upcoming budget by at least 15 to 20% to introduce reforms necessary to uplift the standard of education in the country.



Khanewal

Executive Director - Dr Salamat Ali Sandhu, Anjuman e Ahbab e Islam, initiated the discussion in District Khanewal and the participants explored various themes, mainly the lack of appropriate infrastructure and facilities, post-flood recovery, an increased dropout rate of girls, lack of access to schools for transgender and disabled students and ineffective mechanisms for budget allocation and spending. Tehsil President Waheed Akhtar from Pakistan People's Party, Syed Azmat Ali and Rana Muhammad Imran from the Education Department were among the notable participants of the discussion.



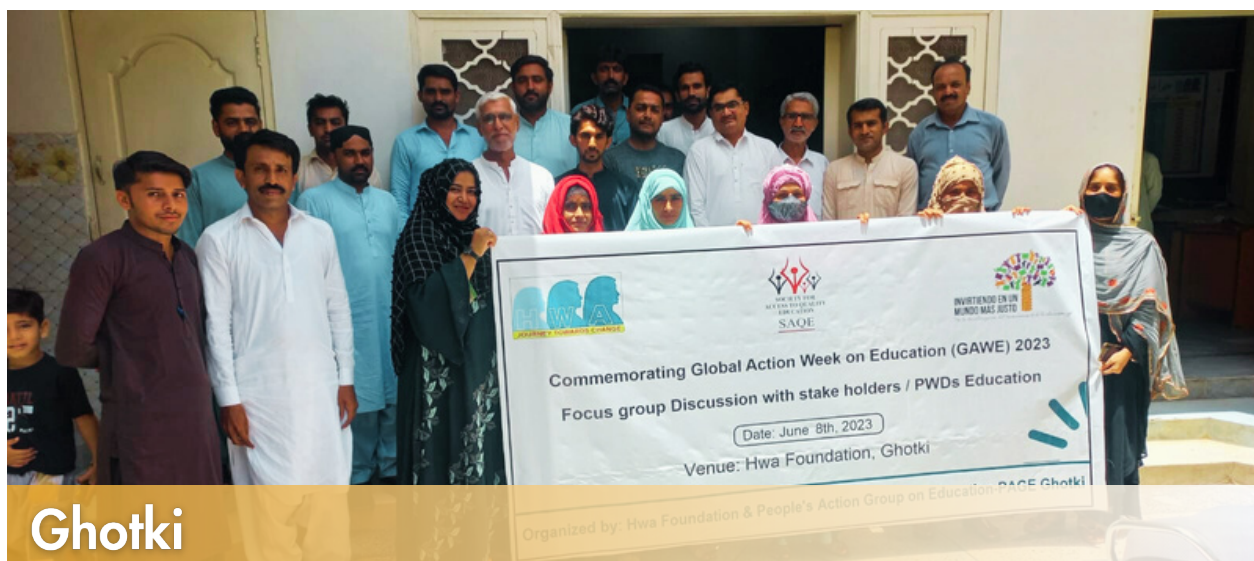
Hafizabad

Irfan Ullah Malik – District Coordinator, Bunyad Foundation led the discussion in District Hafizabad. Muhammad Ishtiaq Nazir, AEO – Education Department, Mian Tayyab - Finance Department, and Farhan Ashraf from Local Administration were among the notable stakeholders who participated in the discussion. Participants underscored the need for an increase in the educational budget; and, the importance of an appropriate and transparent mechanism for budget allocation. The lack of educational institutions for transgenders and disabled students were also among the significant concerns of the participants.



Rajanpur

The activity in District Rajanpur was hosted by Naeem Akbar Jaskani - Executive Director of Community Aid and the discussion was led by Muhammad Bilal Abbasi CEO - Department of Education. Members of political parties including Yosaif Khan Gabool, Pakistan People's Party (MPA) and Muhammad Rashid Shahid Gul, Pakistan Muslim League N participated in the discussion. The insufficiency of the current education budget was highlighted as the major challenge facing education and an increase of about 20% in the budget was prescribed by the participants.



Ghotki

Ghulam Nabi - Manager Programs, HWA Foundation led the discussion in District Ghotki. Javed Baig - Deputy CEO, SVDP and Inayatullah - Taluka Education Officer were among the notable participants of the discussion. The discussion focused on the lack of facilities and ineffective management of schools as major reasons for increased dropout rates. Moreover, lack of proper allocation and utilization of budget was also highlighted as a major hurdle. Representatives from the local authorities shared their experiences and commitments to comply with the recommendations in schools under their jurisdiction.



Swabi

In Swabi the discussion was led by PAGE general secretary - Amjad Ali. Former Minister of Food - Haji Ghafoor Khan Jadoon, Tehsil Chairman - Rahim Jadon, Abdul Wahab - SDO, Department of Education and Muhammad Kamil Khan - EDEO Finance Department - were among the notable people participating in the discussion. The participants advocated for an increase in the education budget by 20% and discussed in detail, the importance of inclusivity and transparency in the budget allocation and spending mechanisms.



Federal

Areebah Shahid - Executive Director, PYCA led the discussion conducted in the Federal territory. Participants emphasized the need for equitable resource distribution, an increase in budget, infrastructure development, community engagement and teacher training. PYCA also conducted in-depth interviews of Ms. Wajiha Qamar -Member National Assembly and Dr. Ahsan Naeem – Area Education Officer, Federal Directorate of Education as they were unable to participate in the discussion. Budgetary constraints were regarded as the major hurdles in effective educational programming by Ms Wajiha, while Dr Ahsan highlighted the need of allocating separate portions of budget for the provision of necessary facilities to students with disabilities. He also stated that a portion of the budget should be dedicated to fund programs which aim to reduce the dropout rates and increase enrollment rates.



Nankana

The Society for Education and Development (SED) organized the discussion in District Nankana. Babar Ilyas AEO - Department of Education participated in the discussion and enlightened the participants on the mechanism of budget allocation. He also shared his experiences and identified the various hurdles in the way of equitable education. The participants shared their own experiences and formulated recommendations which were acknowledged by the DEO.



Buner

Organized By: RDO (Rural Development Organization) Buner

The activity in Buner was hosted by Executive Director - Hakim Zada, Rural Development Organization. The Deputy District Education officers, SDEO Education, ADEO Education, Assistant Commissioner, and Tehsil Chairman were among the notable personalities who participated in the discussion. The Discussion centred on the importance of extending access to education to disabled and other marginalized groups. Allocation of portions of budget for provision of necessary resources and disabled-inclusive teacher training was advocated by the participants for increasing the participation of these groups in education.



Muzaffargarh

In district Muzaffargarh, the discussion was hosted by the CEO - Education Department Nasar Ullah Khan Surani in his office and was organized by SYCOP (Social Youth Council of Patriots). An extensive discourse on the mechanism of budget allocation and spending was done. The insufficiency of the current education budget was highlighted as a major concern and additionally, the participants called for the budget to be more transparent and gender inclusive.



Keamari

Worker's Education and Research Organization (WERO), led by Executive Director, Mir Zulfiqar Ali, organized the activity in District Keamari. Various hurdles in the way of effective education delivery were identified, however, the lack of facilities and ineffective management were among the major concerns of the participants. The importance of the development budget being accessible, structured, and comprehensible by the general public was advocated for by the participants and was regarded as a catalyst to ensure transparency and accountability of the education sector reforms.



Layyah

The discussion in Layyah was conducted by Youth Front Pakistan. Many notable stakeholders including the AEO - Education Department actively participated in the activity. The participants exchanged their views on multiple aspects and regarded increased budgetary allocations, gender sensitization, infrastructure development, teacher training and poverty alleviation as crucial for the improvement of the dire situation of education in the country.

Major Themes Identified

Some of the major themes identified in the FGDs are given below:

Inclusivity and Accessibility

The FGDs emphasized the importance of fostering a safe and supportive learning environment which accepts diversity and accommodates the unique needs of all children. Expanding further, participants underscored the crucial need of extending access to education to all disabled and transgender children and proposed modifications in the teaching methodologies and infrastructure to cater for the unique needs of disabled children. The participants urged for the provision of a supportive environment where children feel accepted and included, which enables them to realize their full potential and hence empowers them to become productive citizens of the country. In Pakistan, no recorded data exists regarding enrollment of transgenders in educational institutes, which seems to be the biggest hurdle in the enrollment of these children in schools.

Budget Allocation and Disbursement

Participants emphasized the need for a substantial increase in the school budget to ensure the provision of adequate resources for the smooth delivery of quality education. They further stressed that the budget should be prepared keeping in account the needs expressed by the school management committees and urged for giving autonomy to the SMCs and teachers for spending school budgets according to their will and rationale, keeping in consideration the needs of the schools. The timely disbursement of funds was also regarded as a crucial factor for the proper utilization of the budget.

Concerns about Girls Education

The participants expressed their concerns regarding girls' education and highlighted that with the increase in the ages of girls, the dropout rates also increase. They regarded the lack of appropriate facilities and washrooms in schools as the core reason for this. In addition, it was stressed that there are no specific allocations in the budget to cater for the specific needs of girls. The feeling of insecurity while commuting to school was highlighted as another factor for increased dropouts.

Recommendations

Many valuable recommendations were brought forth during the FGDs, some of them are given below:

1. The participant suggested an increase in the educational budget by 15 to 20% and allocation of funds based on specific needs and requirements of schools, and by keeping in consideration factors such as student population, infrastructure condition, and resources needed.
2. Transparency in the budget allocation mechanism was also suggested, and it was regarded as means to ensure accountability and equal distribution of funds.
3. The participants recommended the authorities to solicit input from the School Management Committees (SMCs), PAGE, and other relevant stakeholders in the budget formulation process.
4. The participants called for gender-responsive teaching practices, including training programs for teachers, which would promote gender equality, and create a safer and inclusive learning environment for girls, transgenders and the disabled.
5. The allocation of funds to cater for the needs of marginalized groups, including children with disabilities, girls, and transgender children was also prescribed.

Commitments

The stakeholders from education departments shared their input and made commitments to comply with the recommendations in future policy formation. Ms Wajiha Qamar, Member National Assembly and Ambassador Girls Education at the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) shared that the Parliamentarians are well aware of the worsening situation of education across the country generally and Islamabad specifically. She regarded the budgetary constraints as a major hurdle in effective education programming and also expressed a lack of confidence in the upcoming budget in making the situation any better. Ms. Qamar volunteered to spearhead a door-to-door enrolment campaign in rural Islamabad.

Muhammad Bilal Abbasi CEO Education, District Rajanpur expressed his commitment to improve the standard and quality of education in his district and also commended the role of civil society organizations in helping identify and improve the status of education. He also appreciated them for their role during the flood emergency. While Mr. Inayatullah (Taluka Education Officer) district Ghotki promised to plant the recommendations shared in all the schools under his jurisdiction and shared his commitment to forward these ideas to his colleagues. He said that the government is trying its best for the promotion of education and the teaching staff is delivering as per their will and spirit. The education department has planned to initiate the projects for the infrastructure, where needed. Besides this, the education department is conducting training of teachers at reputable training institutes for newly appointed teachers especially. He further added that more attention to the provision of the basic facilities is paid, to decrease the dropout.

Mr. Mukhtiyar ADEO Circle Gagra, District Buner expressed his views on the education of the marginalized groups, regarded them as assets of the country, and called for adapting the learning methodologies according to their needs. Meanwhile, the CEO, district D.G Khan, Syed Muhammad Asif Naqvi highlighted the significance of quality education for girls and explained the grey areas in the way of girls' education in Punjab. He urged the Punjab government to immediately notify the Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Act 2014 which was approved earlier. He stressed on increasing development budgets and their proper utilization for the development of public schools especially for girls, where missing facilities and accessibility is still a major challenge. He also called for mainstreaming the people living with disability and transgender community to make education accessible for all.

Budget Tracking Activity

Member organizations and the Peoples Action Groups for Education (PAGE), created by Pakistan Coalition for Education (an initiative of SAQE) were involved in the budget tracking activity through which they gathered data regarding budget allocation for the FY 2022-23, at the district level. The demand for data from the local authorities helped inculcate social accountability practices among the local population. However, it was concerning to see that district education departments had no records regarding the enrollment of transgenders, disabled, and other minorities. The lack of separate heads for girls and minorities in the budget was also shocking/ startling. The information yielded from the data would serve as valuable input for future advocacy efforts, program design, and policy recommendations.

Banner Placing Activity

Banners were placed in various locations throughout the districts, which endorsed an “increase in the educational budget” and advocated for at least 15-20% allocation for education in the budget. The strategically placed banners in public places attracted the attention of passersby and enabled to orient millions of people, generating curiosity, fostering public awareness and interest in the cause. Banners were displayed outside government schools, district education offices, district courts, town squares, parks and markets, etc.



Impact in Numbers

PCE directly engaged member organizations and PAGE from twelve districts nationwide for executing the activities for the GAWE campaign. FGDs were arranged with relevant stakeholders from the Local administration; Local government; Department of Education, P&D, Finance; Teachers/Parents; Local influential /MPA/MNA, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs); CSOs and Media. Total of 197 members were directly involved in the campaign, a breakdown of which at the district level is given in the table below:

S. No	Province	Name of District	No. of people directly involved
1.	Punjab	DG Khan	15
2.		Khanewal	12
3.		Hafizabad	15
4		Rajanpur	20
5		Nankana	13
6.		Layyah	17
7.		Muzaffargarh	16
8	Sindh	Ghotki	19
9		Keamari	11
10.	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Swabi	16
11.		Buner	30
12.	ICT	ICT	13
		Total	197

While the banners displayed in public places throughout the districts fostered public awareness and curiosity in the cause, indirectly impacting millions of people.

Conclusion

The activities arranged for commemorating the GAWE 2023 helped in enhancing the knowledge and awareness regarding education financing at the grassroots and helped instil the practices of social accountability among the general masses. It enabled the key stakeholder to discuss and identify the challenges confronting education and look for possible solutions to fix them. The lack of recorded information regarding transgenders, disabled and other minorities was highlighted as a significant challenge. Moreover, the insufficiency of the budget and the lack of separate heads to cater for the specific needs of girls and marginalized groups was also concerning. Recommendations formed and shared with the relevant authorities serve as a valuable source of guidance for future policies. The commitments of the representatives to comply with the recommendations serve as a testament to their will to enhance the quality of education in the country.



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