

From Trash Picking To Schooling

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Abstract

The urban poor living in Slums and Squatter Settlements place a high priority on gaining access to basic services including basic education. A project entitled "Faisalabad Area Upgrading Project" was funded by Governments of Pakistan and U.K. The main objective of the project was improving the quality of life of the poor living in low-income areas of Faisalabad city by alleviating the poverty. There were four pilot areas of this project and Chak No. 7/JB was one of them. Basic education was one of the four components of the project. The project approach was purely community participatory or in other words community led one. A team of social organizers from the project was responsible for mobilizing and organizing the community. A community of Trash Pickers called as Changars was residing in this settlement along with other communities like original agriculturist, newly rural migrants, Christians and industrial workers. The Changar Community has never been inclined towards education. Resultantly, their forefathers remained illiterate. Moreover, the parents in Changar Community sent their children for trash picking (collection of recyclable material) from the heaps of solid waste instead of sending them in schools. The social mobilization team of the project mobilized the Changar Community for establishment of a community school. Consequently, the children of Changars' Community started to get education in this school. A research study was conducted to investigate that how the parents were motivated to send their children to school instead of sending them for rubbish collection. The results of study revealed that Changar Community is running the Community School successfully since 1994 and about 150 children are getting education and no one is now going for trash picking. Moreover, it has transforming effects on community and many development activities have been carried out later on by this community on cost sharing basis.

Key words: Trash picking, Changar Community, Formal education, non-formal, Faisalabad

Introduction

A research study was conducted to investigate and explore the course of action that how the children of Changars (trash pickers) community started to get the education where as their forefathers did not attend the schools. It is evident from the title that the children were engaged in the same profession (trash picking-rubbish collection) as their forefathers were doing since long.

A sample per-urban settlement was selected as the universe of the study. A slum/squatter settlement called Chak 7/JB (Punj Warh) Sargodha Road Faisalabad is an old village and became the part of the city when municipal limits of Faisalabad city were extended in 1983. Population of this shanty town/settlement is about 20000 and original area is 175 acres. However, now the surrounding agriculture land has been also converted in to residential and industrial land uses. Different communities like original agriculturists, Christians, newly rural migrants- mostly working in surrounding industries and Changars (trash pickers) are living in this settlement.

There are 130 households of Changar Community on Western side of Chak 7, distinctly defined area as a track of Sui Gas (natural gas) pipe line separates it from the rest of the area. The Changars are living in this village since partition (1947). The Changar Community has different process of integration of culture. They had been living and still most of their relatives live in open and wide area having shrubs and bushes. The Changars migrated from India at the time of partition. At that time their main profession was Circus Entertaining and they were nomads. Afterwards they started keeping animals. Seasonal labour like harvesting is one of their casual occupations. As in rice harvesting season they went away in rice producing areas and all members of the household harvested the rice. Similarly in wheat harvesting season they went out with sweets of different kinds. They gave sweets to the children of farmers and in exchange got wheat. At present the

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major employment/occupation of the Changar Community is trash picking (rubbish collection). Most of the men, women and children are involved in this job. Some of them directly collect the recyclable waste material from solid waste heaps and others are whole sale dealers for this material and they have junk yards in their houses.

A project named Faisalabad Area Upgrading Project (FAUP) was funded by the Governments of Pakistan and U.K. Four pilot areas under this project were selected and Chak No. 7/JB is one of them. The project components included primary health care, street pavement, water supply, sanitation and formal and non-formal basic education. The project was implemented successfully. A non-formal community school was established for the children of Changars Community and now more than 150 children of Changar Community are studying in that school.

The results of a study conducted at country level (both in rural and urban areas) of Pakistan) by Academy of Education Planning and Management (AEPAM, Research Study No. 177), Ministry of Education, Islamabad revealed that there were many reasons for not enrolling boys in schools. Some of the main reasons were: In the opinion of 82% parents, education was too expensive, according to 62% parents, schools are not available, 59% parents said that there were no opportunities for further education, 58% parents considered distance of school and the same number of respondents thought that earning for the family was more important as compared to education that is why the parents did not enroll their sons in the schools. About 30% population of Pakistan is living below the poverty line and this is the major reason (poverty and earning for the family) that parents do not send their children to schools.

The reasons given by the parents for non-enrolling the girls in schools were: about 81% parents considered education too expensive, 67% parents complained non-availability of schools, 63% parents wanted their girls to provide help at home, and 59% parents did not allow their daughters to enroll in the schools because there were no opportunities for further education.

The Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS) 1998 described the following main factors that adversely affect the primary school enrollment rate, thus contributing to the problem of non-attendance and low participation rate: First, distance and access to primary schools is a major impediment. Second, poverty is the main problem, which does not permit children of poor families to either join or continue education. Third, children of literate parents have more interest in education, the families where father or mother is literate; children's enthusiasm for education is greatest. Fourth, illiterate parents are

found conservative, sticking to their traditional values and their conservatism has negative effect on female education.

A research study was conducted to investigate that how the children of Changars' Community who were previously engaged in trash picking (rubbish collection) and their parents were illiterate diverted to get education and were enrolled in a non-formal community school.

Material and Methods

First of all a review of the FAUP documents like project completion report, PC-1, project proposal, and education policy of FAUP was carried out. Second, a briefing from the team leader of FAUP was ascertained and discussions were also held to get familiar with the process and approach of the project. Moreover, a detailed discussion with the Education Specialist of FAUP was conducted. A list of all the squatter settlements and pilot areas of FAUP was collected from the Project Management Unit office that was used as a sampling frame for the study. Fitzbiggon and Morris (1987) stated a simple principle or rule of thumb that "as the size of the population increases the sample size decreases". This principle was the basis of sample selecting procedure for the study. A related principle is that for smaller samples; smaller increase in sample size produces big gains in accuracy. Equal increases in sample size produce more of an increase in accuracy for small than for large samples (Sudman, 1976a:99). A pilot area of FAUP named Chak No. 7/JB was randomly selected as universe of the study. Later on purposively the Changar Community was selected as the respondents. Afterwards many participatory techniques like initial contacts, home visits, corner meetings, key informants interviews, focus group interviews, community meetings, community mapping and transect walk of the area were used. However, for ascertaining the views of the parents about reasons of not sending their children to schools and their satisfaction level after the establishment of community schools a formal survey of all households was also conducted. Therefore, it is mostly a qualitative research based on the information analyzed like the feelings, views, reflection and impression of the respondents as well as the direct observations of the researcher. At the end Yeh's the people's satisfaction level regarding working efficiency of the Community School and about the importance of education for their children. In

comparing YIS, the scale of satisfaction was converted into three point Likert's scale, identifying three levels of satisfaction i.e. satisfied; no opinion (indifferent) and dissatisfied. Subtracting the number of respondents who were not satisfied from the number of satisfied respondents and then dividing it

Results and Discussion

Perception of Changar Community about Education

Education plays a pivotal role for development. It enables people to use their capabilities and to increase their earning potential. The Changar Community consists of poor nomads who do not view education to be an essential component of their life. This community has never been inclined towards education. Consequently, the elders are illiterate. It was reflected by majority of the participants in an informal discussion that the education was given a low priority in the past since their main profession had been Circus Entertaining. Therefore, the elders remained uneducated, so now they have little understanding of the value of education. One of the participants uttered that FAUP team told them that education empowers the recipient to generate and participate in the transformation of their lives and their societies. Due to their profession and living style they were not considered respectable/honorable community in Chak 7/JB and at the time of intervention by FAUP, the situation remained largely unchanged. Their poverty, discouragement of the formal school system, lack of awareness and seasonal migration perpetuates illiteracy. In addition, discrimination and avoidance of external group kept them isolated and illiterate. They believe that since they are too poor to try and educate themselves they should not dream of such things. In one of the follow up meetings, it was told by a community member that about 20% boys and only 5 % girls were going to the schools before the start of FAUP. The community members were of the view that morning time is an earning time as all family members (men+ women+ children) go for trash picking. So they did not consider it so important or productive to send their children in schools in morning time. This was further proved true when the researcher had a subsequent encounter in the morning time with three (3) girls. They were about seven years old and bright-eyed from Chak No. 7/JB, actively picking over a waste tip nearby the District Jail of Faisalabad. The girls were from a single family of Changar Community from Chak No. 7/JB. It was revealed during the discussion that the whole family was engaged in the collection

by the total number of responses obtained the index number. Further the composite/average index of satisfaction to give an overall picture of the community's satisfaction about education was also calculated.

of recyclable waste. They owned a donkey cart for transporting the waste material to a dealer. The girls said that each of them could earn around Rs. 90-100 per day. On a cross question the girls said why should they attend the school in the morning if they are not earning from it.

To explore the parents' view about not sending the children to school and investigate causes of out of school children, a formal survey of 130 households was conducted; the results are presented in Table: 1. Thus unaffordability, lack of awareness, seasonal migration and earning a livelihood for the family were presented as reasons of not getting education.

Establishment of a Community School

Needs Identification

Basic Education was one of the four components of the FAUP, implemented by a Project Management Unit (PMU), Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) to improve the quality of life of poor people living in low-income areas of Faisalabad. Focus group interviews were conducted at two sites (one with males and one with females) with 5-7 representatives of Changars Community. The participants of focus group interviews expressed, when FAUP team started working with the Changar Community, efforts were made to help them realize the importance of education. It was further reflected by community that after awareness raising, project promotion, using several motivational and organizational tools by the FAUP team they expressed the desire of getting education for their children.

In the process of community interaction (community meetings, follow up meetings, preparing community mapping, direct observation, semi-structured interviews and probing) the community showed the interest and expressed the need for the education of their children at such timing schedule which was different from the timing of formal schools. Afterwards different options were developed and during the process of prioritization for different options, the establishment of Community School was finalized.

Table: 1 Reasons Given by Parents for not Enrolling Children in School

Sr. #	Reasons for not Enrolling	Very Important		Important		Less Important	
		No.	% age	No.	% age	No.	% age
1.	Education is too expensive	100	77	20	15	10	8
2.	Making earing for family	110	85	17	13	3	2
3.	Eucation is not usefull	120	92	7	6	3	2
4.	Poverty	122	94	6	5	2	1
5.	Lack of Awareness	119	92	8	6	3	2
6.	Seasonal Migration	115	88	9	7	6	5

Profile of Community School

A community meeting was organized to ascertain the information for preparing the profile of the community school. The meeting was started and through probing by the researcher the participants responded as:

They were agreed on the establishment of such community school which:

- had different timing than formal schools;
- was low-cost (small amount of fee, free books, no restriction of school uniform and no donation etc.);
- provided ease of admission for Changar Community's children; and
- had better standard of education than the formal schools.

The name of the school was proposed by the community as Al-Shammas Apna (my own) School. A site of 5 Marlas (1361 sft.) having boundary wall, hand pump, a small room and some shady trees was provided by community. The project (FAUP) provided teaching material, books and salary of teachers for two years. The money collected from fee @ Rs. 5.00 per student per month in two years was deposited into community account. A school supervisory committee consisting of two community representatives and a social organizer from FAUP project team was formed for looking after the school affairs.

Operation of Community School

The school supervisory committee prepared a list of 50 children from the Changar Community for initial enrollment. The school started working in October, 1994 as first project of FAUP. A formal opening ceremony was arranged and the parents of the children from Changar Community and notables from other communities were invited on this occasion. The opening of the school worked as ice breaking event and the number of students started increasing rapidly. It reached up to 100 but it remained fluctuating as due to seasonal migration of the parents, the children also moved along with their parents. At present there are 150 students (80 boys and 70 girls). Later on many NGOs came up to help the Changar community for continuous funding to the School. The school had completed its 13 years successfully. At present there are four cemented double storey rooms and two teachers with all physical infrastructures.

Achievements of Community School

Review of different FAUP documents, discussion with Education Department's Officers (District Education Officer), local notable persons, members of School Management Council (SMC), a focus group interview with Key informants, community mapping with females of changar community and a big

community meeting of all Changars at Al-Shammas Apna School premises were organized. The summary of the achievements which this Community School since its establishment has earned is given as under:

1. The School Supervisory Committee has been converted into School Management Committee (SMC) which was later on converted into School Management Council;
2. Initially a verand with 50% contribution of the Community was constructed and additional land for school by 15% contribution of community was purchased;
3. Formal examinations are held and prize are given to first three position holders in each class by SMC;
4. About 50 students from this school obtained admission in other formal government schools located in Chak No. 7/JB. They have been incorporated in the formal stream of education and Community School (Al-Shammas Apna School) has been recognized by the teachers of Government Schools in the area who were initially against the establishment of this informal community school.
5. Regular functions on important occasions like Independent Day, Pakistan Day, Quaid-e-Azam anniversary, Children Day, Education for All and Mena Bazaar etc. are regularly celebrated at the school;
6. Teachers have availed about 8 In-service Teachers Training (INSETT) organized by FAUP and 5 general teachers training organized by an NGO named Community Action Programme (CAP) and many other training organized by different organizations;
7. Now the children of Changar Community pay salam to their parents in the morning on departure from homes to school and in afternoon on arrival from school to homes;
8. Students are regularly attending the classes in a school uniform as later on decided by the community members;
9. The SMC is continuously struggling for the physical improvement of the school. There are four cemented double storey rooms, two flushed toilets, donkey motor pump, clean piped drinking water supply along with filtered water cooler, boundary wall and having area of about 10 marlas (2700 sft.);
10. Initially the Changar Community felt, we are poor people, our minds are dumb, and normal we reflected that what we shall get from education, we were better where we are. But now during discussion they said that FAUP team has blessed our children with the ornaments of education. It has demonstration effects and later

on we started participating and contributing in other project activities like sanitation improvement and street pavement in our neighbourhood. This has resulted into increase in land value and value of our houses has increased four times more than before the intervention of this project;

11. Later on the SMC of Community School negotiated with FAUP and a local NGO, to take over the responsibility of the school for further five years and succeeded for it.
12. The school has been running with the sport of a local NGO since 1997. There are 150 children in the school with a waiting list of further 150.
13. The teachers of Community School informed that during the training imparted by FAUP the emphasis was placed on exploring ways of getting children to actively participate in lessons. This action has improved our capabilities and potential of learning as well as teaching skills.

14. The establishment of community school has removed the social, cultural and religious barriers to education, especially for girls of Changar Community.

Satisfaction Level of Community

It was investigated that whether parents from Changar Community are satisfied or dissatisfied with the opening of community school in their community, its functioning and usefulness of education for their children. Further composite indices were developed to give an overall situation analysis of the functioning of community school. The index ranges from +1 to -1. A positive value indicates that there are more parents who are satisfied than those who are not satisfied. Similarly the negative value indicates that there are more parents who are not satisfied than those who are satisfied. The larger the value, the more intensive is the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The following table depicts the results of study from the Changar Community:

Table: 2 Satisfaction Level of Parents Regarding Functioning of Community School

Sr. #	Elements	Index of Satisfaction
1.	Availability of basic facilities at school	+1
2.	Quality of Teaching at School	+1
3.	Interaction of SMC with parents	-1
4.	Usefulness of Education	+1

It is evident from the above table that very high level of satisfaction is estimated for overall functioning of the community school. The positive value indicates that all parents are satisfied with the availability of basic facilities in the school and quality of teaching. It is also clear from the same table that parents are satisfied that their children are getting education which will enable them to use their capabilities and to increase their earning potential. Moreover, they are satisfied that it will empower them to generate and participate in the transformation of their lives and their societies.

Impact of Community School

A probing and participatory reflection session was organized with the notable of the Changar Community. By exploring in depth during the course of discussion majority of them reflected that after comparing their school children with those of other communities (in formal schools), the Changar Community felt that the school time should be morning and their children should also wear formal uniform for honour and identification. By this act the Changar parents stopped their school going children from trash picking and started sending regularly in school. So the journey of *trash picking to schooling* was completed.

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