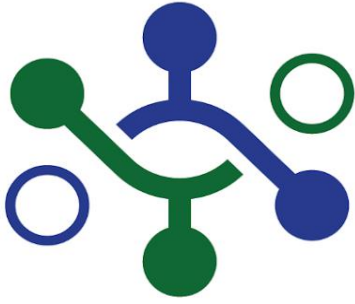




Partnership | Progress | Prosperity



# DARE-RC

DATA AND RESEARCH IN EDUCATION  
RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

جراتِ تحقیق ملے

## DARE-RC

### Call for Applications - Cycle 1



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## 1. Introduction to DARE-RC

The Data and Research in Education - Research Consortium (DARE-RC) is a 30-month FCDO-funded programme. It aims to bring world-class academic research to education decision-makers in a timely and accessible manner in Pakistan. DARE-RC seeks to understand Pakistan's education challenges in more detail through problem identification, operationalising research, and finding or designing high potential solutions and exposing them to rigorous research.

DARE-RC aims to establish a greater symbiotic relationship between producers and consumers of rigorous evidence, by providing opportunities to universities, academia, think-tanks, research institutions and other public and private actors, to carry out robust and rigorous experimental, quasi-experimental, mixed-methods, case study and implementation research on what works to deliver improved education outcomes in basic education (primary and secondary), where possible at scale, for children in Pakistan and especially the most marginalised.

The project will provide an exciting window of opportunity to make a major contribution to answer the question:

***What works to deliver educational access, quality, continuity and coherence to improve learning outcomes at scale, for all children in Pakistan, especially those most marginalised e.g. by gender, disability, location, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status?***

DARE-RC aims to support policy makers and practitioners in the application of research to design, test, adapt and scale interventions and policy responses. Through the research grants and other programme components, the project aims to nurture strong and on-going research-policy collaboration. The application of evidence through informing policy decisions, action-oriented research, and/or implementation science is where DARE's research consortium is focused - blending high-quality, rigorous research and methodological approaches with policy-relevant interventions. Evidence generated under DARE-RC shall meet quality criteria for publication in peer-reviewed journals. This evidence shall be made publicly available.

It is envisaged that the high-quality research under DARE-RC would generate a comprehensive body of knowledge that could guide meaningful and positive change in the learning environments for those children living on the margins. For informing systemic, school, and classroom level changes DARE-RC would develop policy briefs by combining and synthesising insights from the different research projects. These policy briefs will convert research findings into more comprehensive and relatable knowledge for the policymakers and champions of educational change. This compendium of policy briefs will provide the policy makers evidence on addressing the issues of equitable access to education, quality educational experience and improved learning outcomes for girls, children with disabilities, those from minority backgrounds, and otherwise subjected to systematic marginalisation.

## 2. The Call for Applications

DARE-RC is pleased to invite concept notes for small and large grants from eligible organisations for carrying out rigorous research, aligned with the DARE-RC's research agenda.

DARE-RC has developed a targeted, strategic, and realistic research agenda around the key issues across four priority areas for research and cross-cutting themes (see Table 1). Each priority area focuses on generating evidence to support the essential dimensions of the education landscape within the education sector in Pakistan, with high-quality data and scalable solutions. Please refer to the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1 (Annex A) for more details of the priority areas and sub-indicative questions, and the overarching conceptual framework organising the DARE-RC's research portfolio.

**Table 1: DARE-RC Research Priority Areas & Cross-Cutting Themes**

### DARE-RC Research Priority Areas:

1. **What works to improve the drivers of learning for marginalised children in Pakistan?** This priority area focuses on collating and generating evidence focusing on four key drivers of learning defined by the DARE-RC framework – access, quality, continuity and coherence. Specifically, it will aim to identify the challenges and opportunities that shape the educational experiences of marginalised children in Pakistan with a view to identify, at scale if possible, what works, how and for whom.
2. **What works to strengthen frontline education provision quality through building teacher and school system capacities?** This priority area focuses on the role of teachers and effective teaching in shaping a child's educational experience. It will focus on research aimed at identifying what works to improve teacher effectiveness for all children in Pakistan, especially in multi-grade and multilingual settings, whether and how strategies to support teacher well-being can improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes and how adaptive school leadership can respond to disruptive events.
3. **What works to develop resilient education service delivery continuity through systems coherence?** Research under this theme focuses on identifying 'what works' to ensure teaching and learning continuity, especially for the most marginalised, when faced with disruptive events. In doing so, research in this area will examine reforms/strategies that support educators, identify trajectories of educational outcomes (access, quality etc.) of learners before and after disruptive events and focus on which systemic barriers of marginalisation predict and/or mitigate these.

Research under this theme will also examine successful practices for system resilience, and factors that shape the (in)coherence of the policy landscape to ensure access, quality and continuity. It will also examine local perspectives and the role of parents and communities as well as the key challenges and enablers for effective coordination and implementation of crisis mitigation and response strategies at various levels.

- 4. What works to enhance accountability to improve education system cohesion in Pakistan?** A child's access to education and the quality of and continued participation in their learning is shaped in a system that works at both local and policy levels. The system at the local level works through school, community, and household and at the policy level through education policy and stakeholders. The system and stakeholders involved in education set the goals, procedures, resource arrangements and incentives to achieve access, quality, and continuity of learning. When not aligned, these systemic factors can obstruct meaningful accountability, adaptability, and resource allocation in education system operations. The focus of research in this theme will involve examining decentralisation and governance, school monitoring and accountability systems as well as examining the factors that enable and hinder pilot programmes' effective scale-up in the context of Pakistan.

**Cross-Cutting Themes:**

- **'Effective Data Use' and 'Scalable Solutions' have been identified as cross-cutting themes across all four priority areas:** It is important to probe into the collection, management and effective use of data to improve education system to ensure educational access, quality, continuity, and coherence of education for all children especially those who are marginalised. Moreover, it is essential to explore and analyse the different ways through which effective and educational interventions, policies and reforms may be scaled across different regions within Pakistan and to examine the enablers and challenges to take innovative and successful solutions to scale within the educational landscape of Pakistan.

**Table 2: Research Grants Key Information**

Thematic Focus	Research is to be carried out on priority research areas listed in Annex A.
Grant Budget Limit(s)	<p><b>DARE-RC Small Research Grants:</b> PKR 14 million to 34 million (inclusive of all taxes) for a single grant with a maximum of 10% to be allocated for overhead cost.</p> <p><b>DARE-RC Large Research Grants:</b> PKR 28 million to 80 million (inclusive of all taxes) for a single grant with a maximum of 10% to be allocated for overhead cost.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The DARE-RC Research Grant is “not for profit” and will only fund the cost of delivery. A maximum of 10% is to be allocated for overhead cost.</li> <li>ii. The DARE-RC Small and Large Grants are designed to support research costs, and do not fund programme implementation costs.</li> <li>iii. Budget is inclusive of all applicable Federal/Provincial sales tax ensuring that the budget cap mentioned above does not exceed.</li> <li>iv. There will be at source withholding of taxes (income and sales) according to prevailing government rules (Federal and Provincial). No addition of any withholding taxes to the budget caps will be allowed.</li> </ol>
Grant Duration(s)	<p><b>DARE-RC Small Research Grants:</b> 6 to 12 months duration; longer duration up to 15 months can be considered with justification.</p> <p><b>DARE-RC Large Research Grants:</b> 12 to 18 months (We are open to proposals up to 20 months subject to FCDO and OPM agreement).</p>
Geographical Area of the Research Grants	Research may be carried out in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab, Islamabad Capital Territory and Gilgit-Baltistan,

<p>Type of Funding Available</p>	<p>Funding is available for research on educational issues identified in this call for applications. Research grants are competitive in nature and the proposals will be evaluated based on pre-defined eligibility criteria and solicitation process. Only research proposals from eligible applicants with a complete application that meets all criteria and is submitted within the deadline, will be considered and evaluated for research grant awards. For both grants, the applicants are strongly encouraged to explore potential synergies with other existing programme/research grants. In such cases, the applicants who are invited for the Stage 2 (Full-Proposal Submission) will be expected to provide thorough description of the scope and budget of existing grants, the potential synergies and overlap with the DARE-RC grants, and unique contribution of the DARE-RC grants if awarded.</p> <p><b>Funding modalities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Small research grants</b> will provide funding to projects with a budget that falls between PKR 14 million - 34 million. These can include studies that leverage existing evidence and/or data, or studies that require smaller-scale one-time or short-term data collection.</li> <li>• <b>Large research grants</b> will provide funding to projects with a budget that falls between PKR 28 million - 80 million. Projects under this category can comprise those with goals to generate new empirical evidence concerning DARE-RC research priority areas. These proposals may include plans to undertake new quantitative and/or qualitative data collection; and/or to conduct ambitious large-scale secondary data. See more details on types of projects and methodological approaches DARE-RC Small and Large grants seek to fund in Section 6 (DARE-RC Small and Large Research Grants' Scope, Topics of Interest, and Methodological Approaches).</li> </ul> <p>In both cases, it is important that projects draw out implications for policy and practice, showing how they will contribute to the global evidence base where appropriate, and inform FCDO, the Pakistan government as well as other education research and policy audiences.</p>
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	Applicants must state what modality they are applying for and justify their budget request in line with their research design, research timeline and approach to answering research questions.
Submission of Concept Note and Supporting Documents	Will take place on the DARE-RC website at <a href="https://darerc.org/apply-for-grant/">https://darerc.org/apply-for-grant/</a>
Submission Deadline	11:59pm on 12-September-2024 (Pakistan Standard Time)
Contact Details	<a href="mailto:info@rcdare.org">info@rcdare.org</a>

### 3. Eligibility Criteria for Research Projects

Research projects must be relevant to the research and learning objectives of DARE-RC, with a focus on Pakistan and generate robust research that contributes to global learning.

To be eligible for funding, the research must meet the following criteria:

- The research must be relevant and respond to the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1 Call as set out in this document (Annex A). Note: these questions are indicative and broad; we also welcome applications that fall under the priority areas but address related questions.
- The research must produce relevant, timely and accessible evidence on what works in terms of education service delivery in Pakistan.
- The research must be grounded in the key challenges facing Pakistan's education sector, but which can also hold relevance for a global audience.
- The elements of cost effectiveness, relatability, and scalability are critical considerations and must be factored in where possible.
- The research must have an analytical view and include a synthesis of relevant literature indicating the knowledge gap around the research problem.
- The research must be supported by a robust methodological framework – including sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis techniques and conceptual framework.
- Researchers may wish to apply to carry out **primary and empirical research** (including collecting primary data or studies that utilise existing data sets) or **secondary research** studies (e.g. systematic reviews, rigorous reviews or non-systematic reviews).

- Regardless of the type of research being proposed, the research methodologies used must be justified by the research questions, data and timeline. For **empirical research** these may include, for example, and are not limited to: mixed-methods, political economy analyses, regression analysis (e.g. of large-scale data sets), case study research, ethnographic research, cohort/panel-data/longitudinal designs; quasi-experimental designs (e.g. propensity score matching); experimental designs (e.g. difference in difference). For secondary research: systematic reviews, rigorous reviews or non-systematic reviews (e.g. evidence papers, policy briefs etc.) may be proposed.
- The research must showcase its potential value and impact on education policy and practice.
- The research must follow ethical and safeguarding standards.
- The research must be feasibly implemented within the timeframe provided.
- All research under the research grant fund must meet quality standards, based on the principles of the research requirements under the Frascati definition (Section 5).

#### 4. Eligible Organisations

This call for proposal will encourage collaborative research, including through the participation of organisations with different disciplinary backgrounds as long as they can provide evidence of a solid track record of delivering high quality research. This includes academic institutions, research-focused think-tanks, NGOs and consulting companies. Research collaboration with and among public sector universities, engagement of early career researchers in all stages of research and a deliberate effort to mentor mid and early career researchers by seniors will be considered favourably. Applicants from women-led universities and research institutions and those which are geographically remote are encouraged to apply.

Applications having collaborative Pakistani and international expertise are welcome.

Research institutions can only lead on one proposal per cycle, although they can be part of a second application in the same cycle if the proposal is led by another organisation.

Entities applying for the research grant must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- a. The applicant organisation must be a Pakistani entity.
- b. Be legally registered to operate in Pakistan in compliance with relevant business licensing, taxation, audited accounts, employee, and other relevant regulations.
- c. Ability to obtain required No Objection Certificates from the relevant government authorities for implementation of on-ground activities.
- d. Be in satisfactory financial health (at a minimum must have an annual turnover of half the amount of their research grant value, for the last two years).

- e. Demonstrated research experience and expertise in education, specially under the DARE-RC Research priority areas (including the research being proposed by the applicants).
- f. Not be suspended, or debarred, or otherwise identified as ineligible by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Oxford Policy Management (OPM), or any other international organisation (the organisation or applicant must not be bankrupt or involved in any litigation related to bankruptcy).
- g. Have strong financial compliance and internal controls.
- h. Lead Investigator/Researcher must demonstrate a strong publication record (provide links to or submit 2 recent peer-reviewed publications relevant to the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1).
- i. The Lead Investigator/Researcher must demonstrate experience of leading high quality research projects aligned with the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1.
- j. The Lead Investigator/Researcher should have an affiliation with academia or should have a connection with an academia-based research network.

## 5. Research Quality Guidance Note for Applicants

Towards meeting the commitment for a robust body of knowledge and evidence from the studies carried out under the DARE-RC project, a foundational step is having research quality standards in place. This section outlines these quality standards, which are based on the principles of the research requirements under the **Frascati definition**<sup>1</sup>.

DARE-RC will follow quality research standards proposed by the Frascati definition for selecting proposed research studies. Applicants should ensure that their research is:

- **Novel:** Research pursues new advancements in knowledge, generating evidence which furthers or creates new understandings of the challenges and relevant remedies in the education sector;
- **Creative:** Research aims to generate new concepts or ideas that build on the existing knowledge in the education sector;
- **Uncertain:** The outcomes of the proposed research questions are not already known, and research addresses critical evidence gaps;
- **Systematic:** The research uses rigorous methodologies to ensure appropriate tools are developed and used and that there are appropriate sample sizes, and relevant and evidence-based conclusions are drawn; and,

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2015), Frascati Manual 2015: Guidelines for Collecting and Reporting Data on Research and Experimental Development, The Measurement of Scientific, Technological and Innovation Activities, OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264239012-en>

- **Transferable and/or Reproducible:** Knowledge generated by the DARE-RC research projects on educational issues will have relevance to other similar country contexts.

In addition to the above, applicant's concept notes and proposals will be assessed on the following basis:

- Relevance of research topic
- Review of relevant literature
- Contextualisation of the research within existing evidence gaps
- Research design for sampling, data collection and analysis methods
- Links to education policy and practice
- Ethical statement
- Efficiency in research implementation process
- Inclusion of the marginalised
- Collaboration among academics and between institutions
- Financial proposal and value for money
- Additional elements assessed within the proposals for review will include:
  - Realistic timeline and feasibility of project completion within allocated resources
  - Risk identification and mitigation plan

Applicants awarded research grants will have their research study reviewed and quality assured through key points during their research by an assigned DARE-RC quality assurance advisor. The advisor for each study will support the grantee to ensure development of research reports and publishable article manuscripts. The guidance they will use in this process will follow the **IDRC RQ+ Framework**, which has outlined the following quality dimensions<sup>2</sup>:

- **Scientific Rigour:** considering 'the structural quality of the research design' and 'methodological integrity.'
- **Research Legitimacy:** for encompassing how well the research has addressed 'potentially negative consequences', inclusiveness, gender responsiveness, and engagement with local knowledge.
- **Research Importance:** in terms of originality and relevance of research and its products.

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<sup>2</sup>[https://onthinktanks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/RQ\\_A-Holistic-Approach-to-Evaluating-Research.pdf](https://onthinktanks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/RQ_A-Holistic-Approach-to-Evaluating-Research.pdf)

- **Positioning for Use:** considering user engagement, accountability, and openness.

## 6. DARE-RC Small and Large Research Grants' Scope, Topics of Interest, and Methodological Approaches

Our goal for this grant programme is to support rigorous, intellectually ambitious and technically sound research that is relevant to the most pressing questions and compelling opportunities in Pakistan's education sector, identified by the DARE-RC (see DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1 in Annex A). We seek to support scholarship that develops new foundational knowledge that may have a lasting impact on improving education for all children in Pakistan through rigorous and actionable research and evidence.

### Research Topics of Interest

The DARE-RC team has developed a comprehensive research agenda, co-constructed with education policymakers, civil-society organisations, academics, and the wider research community, to answer the question:

*What works to deliver educational access, quality, continuity and coherence to improve learning outcomes, at scale, for all children in Pakistan, especially those most marginalised e.g. by gender, disability, location, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status?*

In this call for proposals, we invite research projects that address the following four priority areas and subthemes. These priority areas and subthemes are inter-connected; and the proposed projects may address multiple priority areas and subthemes. Please refer to the **DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1** in Table 3 below (for more details and suggested indicative research questions refer to Annex A). Projects that focus on understanding and improving the effective use of data to address these priority areas (**Cross-cutting Theme 1: Effective Data Use**) and those that examine pathways to scale promising and innovative programmes, strategies, and policies (**Cross-cutting Theme 2: Scalable Solutions**) will be encouraged.

**Table 3: DARE RC Research Agenda-Cycle 1**

Priority Area	Sub-Theme
<b>1. Improving Drivers of Learning for Marginalised Children:</b> What works to improve drivers of learning (educational access, quality, continuity, coherence) for marginalised children in Pakistan?	<b>1.1</b> Understanding <b>risk and protective factors</b> affecting marginalised children's access, quality, and continuity
	<b>1.2</b> Improving <b>access to, continuity in and quality</b> of education for marginalised children
<b>2. Strengthening Front-Line Education Provision Quality:</b> What works to strengthen	<b>2.1</b> Improving <b>teacher effectiveness</b> in diverse educational contexts of Pakistan

frontline education provision quality through building teacher and school system capacities?	<b>2.2</b> Improving teaching workforce <b>quality</b> through achieving <b>coherence</b> in teacher management and professional development policies and supporting teacher wellbeing.
	<b>2.3</b> Improving <b>quality</b> of education through supporting school leadership
<b>3. Resilient Education Service Delivery through Systems Coherence:</b> What works to develop resilient education service delivery continuity through systems coherence?	<b>3.1</b> Teaching and learning continuity, especially for the marginalised, when faced with disruptive events
	<b>3.2</b> Improving education system resilience to disruptive events
<b>4. Accountable Education Systems:</b> What works to enhance accountability to improve education system cohesion in Pakistan?	<b>4.1</b> Decentralisation and governance
	<b>4.2</b> School monitoring and accountability systems

## Methodological Approaches

- We expect and welcome methodological diversity in answering pressing questions; thus, we are open to projects that utilise a wide array of research methods including quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, computational modelling, participatory methods, political economy analysis, systems diagnostics, and systematic review and analysis of existing evidence and data, to name a few. We are open to and encourage projects that might incorporate data from multiple existing and new sources, or work closely with practitioners, policymakers, or community members over the life of the project. See below for details regarding the types of projects Small and Large Research Grants seek to fund:
- **DARE-RC Small Research Grants** can include studies that leverage existing evidence and/or data, or studies that require smaller-scale one-time or short-term data collection, including and not limited to:
  - Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and research syntheses
  - Secondary data analyses leveraging one or more existing large-scale high-quality datasets, e.g., MICS, EMIS, RTSMS, School report cards, Disaster-related needs report/GPS data, and other datasets collected for programme/policy monitoring and evaluation data purposes and have the potential for contributing to DARE-RC research agenda beyond the original purpose of the data collection

- Smaller scale qualitative/quantitative/mixed-methods studies collecting primary data that addresses the DARE-RC research agenda
- Political economy analysis or systems diagnostics (e.g., RISE [Diagnostic](#))
- Pilot or proof-of-concept studies of promising practices, strategies, and programming with a potential for scale-up.
- Rigorous and contextually-grounded measure development and validation of key educational outcomes and mechanisms of interest (e.g., measures of effective classroom practices, climate change preparedness, key holistic learning/social and emotional outcomes designed for context, culture, and populations of Pakistan)
- **DARE-RC Large Research Grants** seek to fund projects with goals of generating new empirical evidence concerning DARE-RC research priority areas. These proposals may include plans to undertake new quantitative and/or qualitative data collection; and/or to conduct ambitious large-scale secondary data analyses, including and not limited to:
  - Efficacy or effectiveness trials and implementation studies of promising practices, strategies, programming, and policies
  - In-depth examinations of educational experiences and realities of children, teachers, schools, and communities, as well as education systems operations, with newly collected data using rigorous and context-sensitive methodological approaches
  - Large-scale ambitious secondary data analyses utilising one or more or existing large-scale high-quality data sources; or analyses leveraging a combination of new data collection and existing data sources that **(a)** examine longitudinal trajectories of students, teachers, schools or **(b)** estimate causal impacts of education policies, climate events, and other major factors affecting education sector in Pakistan.

## 7. Solicitation Process

Applications for funding will be assessed through a **two-stage application process**.

- The first stage involves the submission of a simple concept note focusing on research questions included in the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1 (Annex A) outlining the linkage of the proposed research to the DARE-RC research theme, research team details, the research problem, research objectives, research context, design and methodology, policy implications, ethical statement and a timeline and budget estimate.
- In addition to the concept note, applicants will be asked to submit supporting documents demonstrating that their entity meets the eligibility criteria.
- In the second stage, successful applicants will be asked to submit a full research proposal among other requirements (Section 13).

## 8. Stage 1- Concept Note Development Guidelines

Submitting the concept note is the first step in the process of conducting a research study under DARE-RC's research grant fund. This section provides a set of instructions to guide research applicants when submitting concept notes. During the project development process, all costs incurred will be borne by the applicant without any expectation of reimbursement, either for successful or unsuccessful proposal cases. Finally, approved projects will also adhere to this understanding that costs incurred prior to the signing of a contract will not be reimbursable.

### i. Content and structure

- The concept note should not exceed 15,000 characters (including spaces). References are not included in this character limit.
- Concept notes must be completed in English.
- The concept note contains the following sections and character limits:

a. The title of the research project (100 characters).

b. A link to the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1 priority areas and subthemes (800 characters).

c. Team details, providing brief biographical data of the research team (1,500 characters): Please note that at least one team member of the research team must be experienced in conducting high-quality research in social sciences (including education) and should have an academic affiliation, or should have a connection with an academia-based research network.

d. The research problem and the rationale for study, including the evidence gap (2,000 characters).

e. The research aims and objectives (1,000 characters):

Clearly state the problem your research aims to address and the specific objectives you intend to achieve.

f. The research context and its significance (1,500 characters):

Describe the research context and why you plan to conduct research within that socio-economic-geographical context.

g. The research design and methodology (3,500 characters):



This section should mention the theoretical perspective that will guide the research methodology, the proposed research sample, sampling techniques, proposed data collection methods, proposed data analysis techniques, and the conceptual framework.

h. Implications for policy and practice (1,500 characters):

Explain clearly how the evidence and learning produced from the research study will be beneficial for different groups of people, and what sort of policy implications exist.

i. Expected outputs and communication Plan (700 characters)

This section should propose expected outputs from the research project and preliminary communication and engagement plan of the evidence. All research should be published, communicated, and made available for public (e.g., open-access journal articles, white papers, public-facing reports, policy briefs, etc).

j. Ethical statement (1,000 characters):

The 'ethical statement' will describe the process of obtaining ethical approval, identifying all the key ethical measures that the applicant will consider while undertaking the research study.

In this section, you should provide details of any ethical issues arising from your project, and how these will be addressed. The researcher must ensure that the research study does not exploit the vulnerabilities of different groups of research participants and should endeavour to conduct ethical research from the start by protecting research participants from any sort of intended or unintended physical, mental, psychological, or emotional harm during the research study. Especially when conducting research with children, minors, and persons with disabilities, researchers must seek consent from their caretakers and accommodate such research participants in all possible ways (Thorley and Henrion, 2019). If ethics approval is not required, this should be clearly justified, along with producing an ethical clearance or exemption letter from the respective Institutional Review Board (IRB). We would expect all field research, and any secondary data analysis that could involve personal identifiable information, to undergo an ethics review.

k. Timeline and budget estimate (1,400 characters):

- Provide a preliminary budget estimate for your research project in PKR. Please specify whether you are applying for the short-term or long-term project grant.
- Break down the expenses and justify the funding requested.
- Provide realistic timelines for conducting the different stages of the research project.
- Provide initial due diligence documents (Section 8.iv).

**Table 4: Concept note structure and character limits**

<b>Section of concept note</b>	<b>Character limit (includes spaces)</b>
Title	100
Linkage to DARE-RC research theme	800
Research team details	1,500
Research problem	2,000
Research objectives	1,000
Research context	1,500
Research design and methodology	3,500
Policy implications	1,500
Expected outputs and communication plans	700
Ethical statement	1,000
Timeline and budget estimates	1,400
<b>Complete concept note</b>	<b>15,000</b>

## ii. Clarity and conciseness

- Write in clear and concise language. Avoid jargon and overly technical terms.
- Review and edit your concept note for clarity, grammar, and spelling errors.

## iii. References

If your concept note includes references, use a standard citation format (e.g. APA, MLA) and list them accurately. References will be excluded from the total character count.

## iv. Compulsory supporting documentation

The following documents are required to be submitted in addition to the concept note. Failure to submit will result in immediate disqualification of the applicant.

- Basic profile of the organisation, detailing year of registration, number of employees including researchers, previous client list, completed and ongoing research projects and other activities. Provide details of two recently completed or ongoing research projects related to the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1. This is to be no longer than five pages.
- Copy of Certificate of Registration, Memorandum and Articles of Association, Byelaws, as appropriate.
- In the case of a Joint Venture Procedure in a single proposal, a teaming agreement outlining the roles and responsibilities of each party.
- An existing Memorandum of Understanding with the Economic Affairs Division of Pakistan (applicable for NGOs only).
- Affidavit on stamped paper stating that the applicant would be able to obtain a No Objection Certificate for carrying out research/data collection under DARE-RC research grant.
- Tax Registration Certificate issued by the relevant tax authorities.
- Evidence that the applicant is up to date with its tax payment obligations, or a certificate of tax exemption (if any such privilege is enjoyed by the applicant) – demonstrated by tax exemption certificate and annual tax returns for the last fiscal year.
- Audited Financial Statements including audit reports (issued by independent audit firm), Management Accounts (internally prepared) and/or Audit Reports (issued by Provincial or Federal offices of Auditor General of Pakistan-AGP) for the last two years:
  - Private Sector Organisations:** Audited Financial Statements and audit reports issued by an independent audit firm.
  - Public Sector Organisations:** Audit reports issued by the Provincial or Federal offices of AGP.

In case both Audited Financial Statements and audit report (issued by an independent audit firm), and Audit Report (issued by AGP) are available, the applicant shall submit Audited Financial Statements and audit reports issued by independent audit firm.

In case where the applicant has only maintained Audit Reports issued by AGP, the applicant shall prepare Management Accounts of last two years, Organisational Management Accounts comprising of Profit and Loss/Income and Expenditure, Cash Flow Statement, Balance Sheet/Statement of financial position and important notes to the accounts. The applicants must provide financial figures of the last year(s) against each head of the above-mentioned accounts for comparative review.

In case an applicant (belonging to a public sector organisation), whose audit has not been conducted by the relevant department for the last two years, must:

(a) Submit in writing on its letterhead dully signed by the competent authority that, "the audit of last two years has not been performed by the relevant department".

(b) Submit any two audit reports of audits being performed in a period of last five years, starting from the closing date of the most recent fiscal year.

(c) Prepare and submit "Management Accounts" as given above based on the financial information of the last two years.

- Affidavit on stamped paper stating that the applicant is not bankrupt or currently involved in any litigation related to bankruptcy.
- All information regarding any past and current litigation during the last five years in which the applicant has been involved, indicating the parties concerned, the subject of the litigation, the amounts involved, and the final resolution (if already concluded); must provide a written signed document on stamped paper.
- Affidavit on stamped paper stating that the applicant is not suspended, or debarred, or otherwise identified as ineligible by FCDO, OPM, or any other international organisation.
- Filled [disclosure form](#) stating any conflict of interest.
- Links to/submission of two recent peer-reviewed publications relevant to the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1 by the Lead Investigator/Researcher.
- A two-page CV and list of publications of the Lead Investigator/Researcher demonstrating experience of leading and conducting high quality research in education/social sciences and affiliation with academia or connection with an academia-based research network.
- Profile of applicant organisation and CVs of research team demonstrating it is a local entity.

## 9. Application Submission Process

Interested applicants will fill out the online [Concept Note Template](#) and submit the required documents on the DARE-RC website, having read through the details provided above.

- Carefully review your concept note before submission to ensure that it aligns with the grant guidelines and responds to the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1 (Annex A).
- Carefully review all supporting documentation to make sure that there are no missing documents. Missing documents will result in an immediate disqualification.

- Completed application forms must be submitted through the DARE-RC website by 11:59 PM 12 September 2024 (Pakistan Standard Time).
- No late submissions or re-submissions will be accepted after the deadline.
- The applicant organisation may submit multiple applications but will only be awarded a single grant.
- Research institutions can only lead on one proposal per cycle, although they can be part of a second application in the same cycle if the proposal is led by another organisation.

## 10. Evaluation and Notification

- Concept notes will undergo an initial screening for eligibility. Only concept notes from entities meeting the eligibility criteria and with all required documentation submitted will be technically reviewed by the research technical experts against the appraisal criteria.
- Any applications with incomplete documentation will not be technically reviewed and will be disqualified.
- Applications will undergo appraisal by the technical review team and DARE-RC Fund Management team. The decision of DARE-RC will be considered as final.
- Applicants scoring at least 60% in each of the three sections of the concept note scoring tool (Section 12) will be considered for the next stage.
- Applicants which have successfully moved onto Stage 2 will be listed on the DARE-RC website and invited to submit a full research proposal
- DARE-RC reserves the right to cancel this call for application at any time without prior notice and/or to not issue any grants under this process.
- DARE-RC reserves the right to request successful applicants to make changes based on feedback from the technical review committee.
- A successful concept note and proposal does not guarantee subsequent funding.

## 11. Questions and Support

If you have any questions or need assistance during the application process, your first point of reference should be the [FAQs](#) on the DARE-RC website. If your query is not addressed by the FAQs, do not hesitate to submit your questions on our dedicated email address: [info@rcdare.org](mailto:info@rcdare.org).

Please note that we can only respond to questions regarding the research call process, eligibility and thematic focus; we cannot provide feedback on individual proposal ideas.

## 12. Concept Note Scoring Tool

Concept notes will be evaluated against the below "Concept Note Scoring Tool." A total of 200 points are distributed among three categories in this scoring tool. A rubric will be used by reviewers to systematically evaluate concept notes and expertise of the applicant organisations. Each category has its own allocated points, and the applicant must obtain at least 60% in each category to move into stage -2. (Annex B contains the detailed concept note scoring tool-rubric).

Concept Note Scoring Tool		Score Weight	Points Obtainable
<b>1</b>	<b>Proposed Research, Methodology, Approach, and Implementation Plan</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>1.1</b>	Relevance of research topic/problem to DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1		10
<b>1.2</b>	Sufficient explanation and analysis of the research context		20
<b>1.3</b>	Analytical view and synthesis of the relevant literature indicating knowledge gap around the research problem		20
<b>1.4</b>	Explanation and justification of Research design and methodology (the proposed research sample, sampling techniques, proposed data collection methods, proposed data analysis techniques, and the conceptual framework)		40
<b>1.5</b>	Explanation of potential value and impact of the proposed study on education policy and practice		20
<b>1.6</b>	Ethics statement outlining ethical measures for the study		10
<b>1.7</b>	Presentation and sequence of research activities promising efficient implementation of the research project		10
<b>1.8</b>	Statement on inclusion of the marginalised (e.g. girls/women, transgenders, individuals with disabilities, members of different religious communities) as research participants or as part of core or/and field research teams		10
<b>2</b>	<b>Expertise of Organisation Applicant</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.1</b>	Reputation and capacity of the organisation to deliver (based on staff, credibility, reliability, industry standing and previous clients list).		10
<b>2.2</b>	Prior research experience in education, especially in the themes under the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1		15
<b>2.3</b>	Research collaboration with and among public sector universities, engagement of early career researchers in all stages of research and /or applicants from women-led universities and research institutions and those which are geographically remote.		5
<b>3</b>	<b>Management Structure and Key Personnel</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>30</b>

<b>3.1</b>	Composition of the proposed team reflecting a range of diverse expertise and experience required for undertaking the proposed study and the work division amongst the proposed team members: - Lead Investigator/Researcher should demonstrate experience of leading high quality research projects - Lead Investigator/Researcher should have an affiliation with academia or should have a connection with an academia-based research network.		15
<b>3.2</b>	Lead Investigator/Researcher must demonstrate a strong publication record (2 recent peer-reviewed publications relevant to the DARE-RC Research Agenda – Cycle 1).		10
<b>3.3</b>	Workload distribution among the research team		5
<b>Total</b>			<b>200</b>

### 13. Stage 2 Process

Applicants moving to the second stage will be invited to submit a **full research proposal** among other requirements.

- The full research proposal will cover the following sections:
  - I. Research questions/problems
  - II. Research context
  - III. Literature review
  - IV. Theoretical framework
  - V. Research methods
  - VI. Project management
  - VII. Risk mitigation plan
  - VIII. Complete project design
  - IX. Expected output and communication/engagement plan
  - X. Budget
- A virtual orientation workshop, organised by DARE-RC, will aid applicants in understanding the proposal template and other associated requirements.
- Applicants may be invited for a pitch presentation before finalisation and approval of proposals.
- Approved applicants will be awarded the research grant, incumbent upon clearing the due diligence process.
- Successful awards are expected to start immediately upon the signing of the contract.

### 14. Ethical Concerns in Research

The significance of research ethics lies in their importance for upholding scientific integrity, safeguarding human rights and dignity, and promoting cooperation between the scientific

community and society. These fundamental principles ensure that participation in research studies is voluntary, informed, and secure for all research subjects, with the eventual aim of improving lives (Tuckman and Harper, 2012)<sup>3</sup>.

Researchers must strike a balance between pursuing valuable research objectives and employing ethical research methods and procedures. It is crucial to prevent any form of harm to participants, whether it occurs advertently or inadvertently.

Violation of research ethics can significantly undermine the credibility of your research, as others may find it challenging to trust your data when the methods used are ethically questionable.

**Before starting any research involving data collection from human participants, you are required to submit your research proposal to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for ethical approval.**

An IRB is a committee that is responsible for assessing the ethical acceptability of your research objectives and design, ensuring compliance with your institution's code of conduct, and confirming that your research materials and procedures adhere to ethical standards (Tuckman and Harper, 2012). If your proposal receives IRB approval, you can proceed with data collection according to the approved procedures. If any modifications to your procedures or materials become necessary, you will need to resubmit an application for approval to the IRB. **In seeking IRB approval, it is imperative to explicitly state how you plan to address each of the potential ethical issues that may arise during your study.**

Considering the above ethical stance in research, the applicants must follow the below:

**At the time of submitting concept note:** The applicant is to provide an ethics statement (in the online application template) focusing on protentional ethical issues that may arise and how to address them during the study. This is to ensure that the research study will not exploit vulnerabilities of different groups. The ethical statement will describe the process of obtaining ethical approval, identifying all the key ethical measures that the applicant will consider while undertaking the research study.

**At the time of submitting proposal (at stage 2):** The applicant should provide an ethics statement and plan of any ethical issues (in the online application template) arising from the project and how they will be managed. This should include a description of institutional or other ethics review processes, and how these will be funded. Proposals are expected to refer to the ethics rules and regulations of their organisation. If ethics approval is not required, this should

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<sup>3</sup> Tuckman, B. W., and Harper, B. E. (2012) *Conducting Educational Research*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.



be clearly justified along with producing an ethical clearance exemption letter from the respective IRB.

**At the time of submission of inception report (by successful and contracted grantees):**

The grantees whose proposals and associated requirements i.e. detailed due diligence and signing of contract are completed, shall submit their ethical approval from IRB at the time of submitting their inception report.

### **15. Conflict of Interest**

All applicants will be asked to submit a [disclosure form](#) to help us determine whether any conflicts of interest may exist in your application. The answers to these questions will be treated confidentially by the DARE-RC directorate and will not be shared with reviewers or panellists.

Your answers to these questions will not usually disqualify a proposal but may require us to take additional actions to mitigate potential conflicts. The disclosure shall mention the following:

1. Are any member/s of the applicant research team also members of DARE-RC? Are any individuals or organisations named in this proposal employed a) as a named post-holder of or b) to provide a service to the DARE-RC directorate, intellectual leadership team, or advisory board? If yes, please specify who these organisations/members are and the nature of their involvement in DARE-RC.
2. Do any member/s of the applicant research team have financial interests or commercial relationships with the department/organisation under study or in the field of the study relevant for the proposed research? If yes, please specify who these members are and the nature of their commercial and financial stakes in the field of the study or with the department /organisation under study.

### **16. Expected Outputs**

Project deliverables shall include the following:

- Inception Report (Ethical approval certificate, data collection plan, training plan, data analysis strategies and research tools).
- Mid-project progress report
- Final report
- Primary raw data collected
- Publication draft for submission

## **17. Privacy Policy**

By submitting an application under this Call, applicants consent to the disclosure of documents they submit to DARE-RC. If selected for funding, applicants further consent to the disclosure of their name and the title of the proposed project in any announcement of selected projects.

## **18. Safeguarding**

Strict guidelines must be followed in order to protect research participants, particularly those who are vulnerable from harm. Proposals must detail plans for protecting research participants that are aligned with the DARE-RC Safeguarding Processes.

OPM, in clear alignment with the FCDO, maintains a zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse within supplier organisations, which includes their downstream supply chains. Successful applicants will be responsible for assessing safeguarding policies and practices of any of its downstream partners/research teams. They will comply with all OPM and FCDO safeguarding policies and will be required to demonstrate that they have robust approaches in place to reduce the risk of bullying, harassment and exploitation and to manage instances if they take place.

OPM will require assurances from successful applicants regarding protection from violence, exploitation and abuse through involvement, directly or indirectly. Applicants will be required to include a statement that they have duty of care to informants, other project stakeholders and their own staff, and that they will comply with the ethics principles in all project activities.

Safeguarding training of research staff at all levels (following the DARE-RC Safeguarding training procedures), including and especially any research enumerators who go to the field, will be necessary. Application to and/or approval from research ethics boards alone will not suffice for complying with safeguarding requirements.

## **19. Branding and Transparency**

Researchers that receive funding must use the FCDO logo (i.e. the UK International Development logo) on their DARE-RC research projects, to be transparent and acknowledge that they are funded by UK taxpayers. However no publicity is to be given in relation to this Contract without the prior written consent of OPM.

The FCDO requires suppliers receiving and managing funds to release open data on how this money is spent, in common, standard, re-useable format and to require this level of information from immediate sub-contractors, sub-agencies and partners.

It is a contractual requirement for all suppliers to comply with this, and to ensure they have the appropriate tools to enable routine financial reporting, publishing of accurate data and providing evidence of this to the FCDO.

## 20. Administrative Provisions

The following administrative provisions shall be considered by all applicants, as they will need to adhere to them if they are selected.

### i. Budget and payment

Fund size of each grant can range between the following:

- a) Small research projects: PKR 14 million to 34 million (inclusive of all taxes) for a single grant with a maximum of 10% to be allocated for overhead cost.
- b) Large research projects: PKR 28 million to 80 million (inclusive of all taxes) for a single grant with a maximum of 10% to be allocated for overhead cost.

The grantee will need to demonstrate effective and efficient costing within the allocated budget while maintaining Value for Money and delivering high quality work.

Successful grantees will receive four milestone payments (subject to contract negotiations):

- 1) 30% at the time of signing of agreement.
- 2) 10% at the time of submission of the inception report.
- 3) 20% at the time of submission of midterm review report.
- 4) 40% at the time of submission of final report (including publication and dissemination plan, research finding presentation, final research report, article manuscript and primary raw data collected).

Release of payments will be made on approval of outputs by DARE-RC. Contracts with suppliers will mirror OPM's contract terms with the FCDO.

### ii. Logistics and procedures

The Supplier will be responsible for all logistical arrangements required to conduct research as per the approved budget.

### iii. Intellectual property

Any project specific deliverables (written documents, primary data collected, audio-visual materials, etc.) created under the research project shall be owned by the FCDO.

Research outputs produced under the DARE-RC call must be aligned to the FCDO's "Research Open and Enhanced Access Policy"<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-research-open-and-enhanced-access-policy>

Researchers are to acknowledge FCDO funding in the research project final outputs by stating that "This research product has been funded with UK International Development from the UK government under the DARE-RC programme".

#### **iv. License to operate**

The successful grantees shall have the appropriate license to operate within Pakistan. This consists of relevant No Objection Certificates/MOUs from relevant authorities for carrying out research/data collection under DARE-RC research grant.

#### **21. OPM Policies**

Successful grantees must comply with OPM policies, including passing due diligence requirements.

## Annexes

### Annex A - DARE RC Research Agenda-Cycle 1

#### Priority Area One: What works to improve drivers of learning for marginalised children in Pakistan?

##### **Sub-theme 1.1: Understanding risk and protective factors affecting marginalised children's access, quality, and continuity**

##### **Broad Research Question**

What are the lived experiences of marginalised children including girls, SEND, religious minority children in schools, at home, and within their community and how do they shape their educational outcomes?

What is the role of parents, community and schools to improve access to and continuity in meaningful education for marginalised children?

What are pragmatic and contextually grounded strategies to strengthen inclusive education policy implementation and service delivery in Pakistan?

##### **Indicative sub-questions**

##### **1. Lived experiences of marginalised children:**

- Which school-level factors (e.g., facilities, assistive devices, relevant competencies, and attitudes of teachers and headteachers, peer support) facilitate the integration of children with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream schools in Pakistan?
- What are teachers' and school administration's perceptions of students from marginalised backgrounds and how do they shape pedagogical and administrative practices in terms of equity and learning experiences of these children?

##### **2. Parental and community support:**

- What are the parents', communities', and school teachers and administrations' perceptions of girls, children with SEND, and religious minority children's education?
- What works to improve awareness and support for equitable access, quality, and continuity of education for girls, children with SEND, and religious minority children among parents, community, and schools?
- What are the facilitators and barriers of implementing and replicating parental, community, and school administration engagement strategies at scale?
- How do supply side factors influence parental choice for girls' transition to the next level of education?
- Which forms of parental and community support (e.g., early identification, social acceptance, resourcefulness to seek help) contribute towards school participation and learning outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream schools in Pakistan?

### 3. Education system considerations:

- What are key enabling factors and hindrances for designing and implementing pragmatic and contextually grounded strategies to strengthen inclusive education policy implementation and service delivery in Pakistan?

## Sub-theme 1.2: Improving access to, continuity of and quality of education for marginalised children

### Broad Research Question

Do alternative/supplemental education programmes offer an opportunity for improved access and continuity of education for the most marginalised?

How are the marginalised represented in the National Curriculum and does this influence their access to and continuity in education?

What are the relative impacts and costs/benefits of financial support for programmes targeting the most marginalised?

What works to improve educational experience and holistic learning outcomes for marginalised children in alternative/supplementary education programmes or in mainstream government schools?

### Indicative sub-questions

#### 1. Alternatives to formal schooling:

- Does alternative/supplemental education programming (including FLN, TaRL/CPB, Community-based Education Centres) provide additional benefits to marginalised children's (girls, children with SEND, and religious minority children)
  - a. access (informal/formal school enrolment, attendance) and
  - b. continuity (retention, secondary school transition, grade progression) of education?
  - c. do these increased access and continuity improve their holistic learning outcomes?

**Flexible approaches to girls' education:** Can alternate pathways (to formal schooling) improve adolescent girls' education participation and outcomes?

#### 2. Representation:

- How are minority religious groups, children with disabilities, girls or those from disadvantaged backgrounds portrayed and represented in the current National Curriculum of Pakistan and does this influence their education outcomes?

#### 3. Provision of targeted financial support:

- How does providing various forms of financial support (e.g., cash transfers, scholarships, transport, meals) influence access to schooling and learning outcomes for girls/children with disabilities/minorities/those from disadvantaged backgrounds in Pakistan? (opportunity to evaluate existing data on specific programmes)

- What are the relative additional benefits per cost of the various financial support programmes (e.g., cash transfers, scholarships, transport, meals) for improving access and continuity of education for marginalised children? (opportunity to use in-depth cost data of specific programmes and evaluate cost-benefit analysis/meta-analysis).

#### 4. Political economy aspects:

- **Regulation of private schools:** How can policies and regulations be designed to ensure that private and PPP schools in Pakistan reach and serve the most disadvantaged students, promoting equity in access to quality education?
  - a. What are the incentives for private/PPP schools to provide quality educations for marginalised student populations? (girls, SEND, religious minority, rural)
  - b. What are the goals, processes, incentives, resource arrangements, capacities of key stakeholders involved in political economy of private school regulations? How they are aligned/misaligned?

#### **What works to support marginalised children within alternative/supplementary education programmes to improve educational experiences and holistic learning?**

- What works (e.g., inclusive pedagogical approaches and curricula, targeted screening, tiered supports) to improve educational experiences (quality) and holistic learning outcomes within alternative/supplemental education for girls, children with SEND, and religious minority children?
- Agency and empowerment: How can formal and informal education pathways influence the aspirations, agency, leadership, motivation, and choice for all children and for the marginalised?
- Gender-responsive pedagogical approaches: How do gender-responsive pedagogical approaches influence school participation and/or learning outcomes for the marginalised?

### **Priority Area Two: What works to strengthening front-line education provision quality through building teacher and school capacities?**

#### **Sub-theme 2.1: Improving teaching effectiveness in diverse educational contexts of Pakistan**

##### **Broad Research Question**

What are the effective and scalable teaching and assessment strategies that improve quality of instruction and holistic learning outcomes in the multi-grade/multilingual contexts in Pakistan?

##### **Indicative sub-questions**

##### **1. Effective teaching strategies in multi-grade/multilingual contexts:**

- What does the teaching practice in multi-grade/multilingual classrooms in Pakistan look like? What are the facilitators and barriers of effective teaching in multi-grade/multi-lingual classrooms? (opportunity to conduct classroom observations)
- Which pedagogical strategies (e.g., differentiated learning, multi-lingual instruction) improve (a) classroom instructional quality, and in turn (b) students' learning outcomes in foundational learning

outcomes (literacy, numeracy, and science) in multi-grade/multilingual contexts in Pakistan?

a. What are the main facilitators and barriers for implementation of effective multi-grade/multilingual pedagogical strategies **at scale**?

- Which assessment strategies are effective for monitoring and evaluating student progress in multi-grade/multilingual contexts in Pakistan?
  - a. What are the main facilitators and barriers for implementation of effective multi-grade/multilingual pedagogical strategies at scale (opportunity to evaluate promising programmes)

## **Sub-theme 2.2: Improving teacher workforce quality**

### **Broad Research Question**

What are the critical policy enablers and constraints influencing teacher management and professional development policies and practices (e.g., preparation, recruitment, retention, allocation/placement and teacher training and professional development) in Pakistan's education system?

Have any specific reforms aimed at improving teacher management and professional development improved teaching quality and/or student outcomes, how and in what ways?

Do teacher well-being support programmes/strategies/reforms improve (a) teacher professional well-being, (b) instructional quality and (c) student outcomes?

### **Indicative sub-questions**

1. **Policy enablers and hindrances in the implementation of teacher management and professional development policies:**
  - What have been the critical enablers and hindrances in the implementation of key teacher reforms in Pakistan? (opportunity to conduct a political economy analysis; opportunity to synthesise reforms focused on teacher management and professional development).
  - What shapes the (in)coherence of the policy landscape for teacher management (recruitment, retention, and placement) and teacher professional development policy reform in Pakistan?
  - What are the goals, processes, resource arrangements, capacities, and incentives of the key stakeholders (state government, schools, teachers, etc)?
  - To what extent do these goals, processes, resource arrangements and incentives promote or detract from improving teacher retention, teaching quality, and teacher professional well-being?
2. **Teacher recruitment policies and teacher professional development:**
  - Does teacher recruitment and professional training policy reform (e.g., teaching licensure in Sindh) improve (a) quality of teaching practices and (b) student learning outcomes? (potential evaluation question if systematic data on teacher retention exist);
  - Have specific teacher management and/or professional development reforms improved accountability and teaching quality? Have they generated improvements in teacher retention rates and student outcomes? Is there variation by location (e.g. rural versus urban?)



### 3. **Teacher well-being reforms:**

- How do government teacher recruitment, management, and accountability reforms and policies, strategies in Pakistan affect teacher well-being?
- What are the effects of policies, strategies, and programmes aimed to improve teacher well-being support in Pakistan, if any? Do these show improvements in (a) instructional quality and/or (b) student outcomes?
- What are the school, community, and individual predictors of teacher professional well-being (motivation, agency, burnout/mental health) in Pakistan? Does teacher well-being in Pakistan predicts teaching quality and student learning?

## **Sub-theme 2.3: Improve quality of education through supporting school leadership**

### **Broad Research Question**

What type of school leadership predicts school performance and student outcomes in Pakistan context?

What school leadership programmes/strategies/reforms in Pakistan, if any, affect school leadership capacity and autonomy?

How can school leaders be supported for adaptive leadership when faced with disruptions to education?

### **Indicative sub-questions**

#### **1. School leadership reforms:**

- What type of school leadership predicts student enrolment, attendance, participation, and learning outcomes in Pakistan context? How?
- What educational reforms and policies/strategies, such as designated posts, training, and autonomy, affect the performance of the school leaders' capacity? Does improved school leadership capacity, in turn, improve student enrolment, attendance, participation and learning outcomes in Pakistan?
- What are the promising interventions/programmes in supporting school leadership in Pakistan? Do these show improvements in (a) school management (b) teaching effectiveness and/or (c) student outcomes?

#### **2. Adaptive school leadership in response to disruptions**

- Are there current efforts/interventions that are aimed at supporting schools and school leaders when faced with disruptive events such as floods?
- Do school leaders have the support, resources and training needed to delivery education when faced with disruptive events?
- What are the promising strategies to support adaptive school leadership when faced with disruptions to education?
- What shapes (in)coherence of the policy landscape for effective, nimble, and adaptive school leadership to ensure access, quality, and continuity of education during disruptive events in Pakistan (climate disasters, pandemic, security concerns)?
- What are the goals, procedures, resource arrangements, and incentives of the key stakeholders (state government, school heads, teachers, community, parents) when faced with such disruptive events?

To what degree do these goals, processes, resource arrangements and incentives promote or detract from improving effective and adaptive response to disruptive events?

### **Priority Area Three: What works to develop resilient education service delivery continuity through systems coherence?**

#### **Sub-theme 3.1: Ensuring teaching and learning continuity when faced with disruptions to education**

##### **Broad Research Question**

How do disruptive events such as those induced by climate change influence access, quality, and continuity of education in different regions of Pakistan? What factors aggravate or mitigate the impacts of disaster-related disruptive events?

What are the effects/impacts of existing climate education practices and policies, if any, in preparing and capacitating schools and teachers in building resilience (knowledge, understanding, and responsiveness) towards climate-related and/or other disruptions?

What are the promising and scalable policies, strategies, and programmes to prepare learners, teachers, schools, and communities for climate disaster risks?

##### **Indicative sub-questions**

1. **Tracking the continuity of education of learners facing climate disaster risks:**
  - What are the trajectories of education access, quality, and continuity of learners before and after the experience climate disaster-related disruptions?
  - What systematic (e.g., gender, disability, religious minority), individual (academic/social-emotional competence, motivation), household, and community factors predict educational trajectories affected by climate disasters?
  - What school mitigation/response strategies predict educational trajectories affected by climate disasters?
2. **Adaptive teaching**
  - Are there current efforts/interventions aimed at supporting educators/teachers when faced with disruptive events such as floods? (opportunity to synthesise evidence).
  - Do educators/teachers have the support, resources, knowledge and training needed to deliver education when faced with disruptive events?
  - How do the current climate education practices and policies at the national and provincial levels prepare and capacitate schools and teachers in building resilience (knowledge, understanding, and responsiveness) towards climate-related and/or other disruptions among their students?
  - How can educators/teachers be supported for adaptive teaching when faced with disruptions to education? Are there examples of best practice globally and from Pakistan of what has worked?
3. **Policies and interventions for teaching and learning continuity:**
  - What specific policies and interventions aimed at teachers and learners during the climate change induced flooding of 2022 were found to be effective in maintaining the continuity of learning in

Pakistan? How can they contribute to adaptation and mitigation actions to respond to current and future climate change impacts?

- What shapes (in)coherence of the policy landscape for effective, nimble, and adaptive teaching strategies to ensure access, quality, and continuity of education during disruptive events in Pakistan (climate disasters, pandemic, security concerns)?

### Sub-theme 3.2: System Resilience to Climate Change

#### Broad Research Question

How can the governments in Pakistan optimise disaster preparedness, response, and resource allocation?

How can research outcomes guide policies and programmes related to standards, criteria, funding allocation, and community engagement?

#### Indicative sub-questions

##### 1. System Responsiveness and successful practices for system resilience:

- How do education systems (at school, district and provincial levels) in Pakistan assess, monitor, and respond to hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities to climate change related and/or other crises at the school and community level?
- What factors shape the (in)coherence of the policy landscape to ensure access, quality, and continuity of education during disruptive events in Pakistan (climate disasters, pandemic, security concerns);
- What are the goals, procedures, resources and arrangements and incentives of key stakeholders (e.g. state government, school heads, teachers, community, parents)? Extent to which these promote or detract from improving effective and adaptive response to disruptive event (e.g. based on examples of promising data-use practices and strategies for data-informed disaster preparedness planning).
- What are the key challenges and successful practices in coordinating and implementing crisis mitigation and response strategies at the district school community, and provincial levels to ensure the continuity of education during disruptions.
- How does Pakistan's National Curriculum currently address climate change education in terms of content, approach, and student engagement? What specific changes could be made to Pakistan's national curriculum to educate students more effectively about climate change?

##### 2. Localised response strategies:

- What does a resilient education system mean to learners, teachers, parents, and communities?
  - a. What do they perceive as their role in risk management, adaptation, and resilience building?
  - b. How are parents and communities engaged in education system resilience building activities and how can their resilience be strengthened?
  - c. How do gender, disability, location (urban/rural), belonging to a minority and/or being from a poorer socio-economic background affect experiences of risk-informed learning environment and resilience building?
- How have recent experiences in relation to disruptions (e.g. climate-related, pandemic, law, and order) shaped the understanding of learners (and especially for the most marginalised), teachers, school heads, and local communities about a resilient education system in the context of Pakistan? How has this understanding translated into localised adaptation and mitigation strategies by schools and wider communities?

**3. Learner engagement for system resilience:**

- Are there current policy efforts/interventions that are aimed at supporting learners, especially the most marginalised, when faced with disruptive events such as floods?
- What are learner perspectives, especially of the most marginalised, of their knowledge and agency in meeting the challenges of disruptive events on their education experiences?

**Priority Area Four: What works to enhance accountability to improve education system cohesion in Pakistan?**

**Sub-theme 4.1: Decentralisation and Governance**

**Broad Research Question**

What are the political economy considerations around the decentralisation of education policies and governance in Pakistan and how have reform efforts affected the effectiveness of public schools?

Which factors enable or hinder decentralisation efforts for improved educational outcomes?

What factors affect accountability and effectiveness of the decentralised education systems in Pakistan?  
What promising strategies can facilitate the accountability and effectiveness the decentralised education systems in Pakistan?

**Indicative sub-questions**

**1. Political Economy of Decentralisation Reform:**

- How has the decentralisation of education influenced the functioning of public schools in Pakistan?
- How are the responsibilities and accountability distributed across key stakeholders at national, state, district, officials and school levels?
- What are the goals, processes, resource arrangements, capacities, and incentives of these key stakeholders play in ensuring access, quality, and continuity of education? How are they aligned/misaligned within and across stakeholders?

**2. Implementation challenges:** What are the key challenges faced by district, sub-district, and school-level decision-makers in implementing decentralised education policies, and how can these challenges be overcome to improve education outcomes?

**3. Bottom-up accountability:** What are the feedback loops that can be created to revise and amend policies as they are being implemented? How can local communities, parent groups and other district and school level stakeholders get involved in providing timely feedback on the implementation of policies?

**Sub-theme 4.2: Coherence of school monitoring and accountability systems**

**Broad Research Question**

What are the key factors that influence the accountability of various education stakeholders to achieve access, quality, and continuity of education provision in public schools across Pakistan?

What are the promising strategies and tools to improve monitoring and accountability systems, at school, district, provincial, and federal level, to achieve quality learning experiences and improved student learning outcomes?

### **Indicative sub-questions**

1. **(In)Coherence of school monitoring and accountability systems:**
  - How do monitoring and accountability systems operate to achieve access, quality, and continuity of education provision? Specifically:
    - a. Who are the stakeholders involved in school monitoring data generation, management, and use within the school and teacher accountability systems at national, state/provincial, and local levels?
    - b. What monitoring data are used for what accountability decisions, by whom?
    - c. What are the goals, processes, incentives, resource arrangements, capacities of these key stakeholders? How they are aligned/misaligned?
    - d. What are the enablers and constraints in achieving coherence and effectiveness of accountability systems ensuring access, quality, and continuity?
 (opportunity to conduct a political economy analysis and primary research)
2. **Lessons from accountability models:** What can be learned from existing models of monitoring and accountability for teachers and school management that contribute towards improved student learning outcomes in Pakistan? (opportunity to evaluate a specific model).
3. **Teacher accountability:** How can accountability mechanisms (rewards/sanctions, support systems) at the federal, provincial, district and school levels support/hinder teachers in achieving better learning outcomes for children in Pakistan? What are some of the important feedback loops that are responsive to local school level needs?
4. **Diagnostic tools and frameworks for building accountability systems:** Based on evidence on effective practices from Pakistan and other developing countries, what diagnostic tools can be developed for monitoring/accountability systems in Pakistan at the national, provincial and local levels?

### **Cross-cutting theme 1: Effective data use**

**What works to ensure the effective use of data to improve education system coherence, resilience, and policy implementation?**

#### **Broad Research Question**

What policies, systems, and strategies on use of assessment data drive improvements in teaching quality, policy, and accountability for better learning outcomes in Pakistan's education system?

What are key factors and considerations for pragmatic and contextually grounded strengthening of inclusive education policy implementation and service delivery in Pakistan, and how can the impact of resources be maximised?

How are data on marginalised children, including girls, children with disabilities, religious minority children collected, managed, and used for education decision-making?

What are the existing school monitoring models and data utilisation practices in Pakistan's education system, and how can the optimisation of data utilisation enhance decision-making processes for improved student learning outcomes?

Does data exist in Pakistan to inform effective mitigation strategies for education continuity when faced with disruptions? How can data be best utilised to develop effective mitigation strategies?

### **Indicative sub-questions**

#### **1. Data collection and use:**

- How are the data on marginalised children, including girls, SEND, religious minority children collected, managed, and used?
- What are the enablers and constraints to collect, manage, and use the data to improve access, quality, and continuity of education for marginalised children?

#### **2. Assessment data for improved learning outcomes and improved policy and planning:**

- How do school heads and teachers use assessment (formative and summative) data to monitor and improve teaching and learning at the right level?
- How do school heads and teachers use assessment (formative and summative) data to monitor and improve learning outcomes in foundational literacy, numeracy, and science in schools in Pakistan?
- What are the most critical gaps in assessment data in Pakistan?
- How can large-scale assessment data be utilised to enhance policy and planning, system accountability, and communication with diverse stakeholders including parents?

#### **3. Data- and evidence-driven decision making:**

- What works to improve coherence of data systems across stakeholders to support marginalised children's access, quality, and continuity?
- How can the utilisation of data from school monitoring models be optimised to improve decision-making processes at the school and district levels, ultimately leading to better student learning outcomes?
- What are the current school monitoring models working across Pakistan? What sort of data is being generated through these models and how is that data being managed and used for improved education service delivery in public schools?
- How can the utilisation of data from school monitoring models be optimised to improve decision-making processes at the school and district levels, ultimately leading to better student learning outcomes? What are the bottlenecks in the system for evidence and research uptake and where and at what levels of the system can we most effectively supply evidence?

#### **4. Developing data-informed, inclusive and comprehensive adaptation and mitigation strategies for continuity of education and learning for all:**

- What types of data exist in Pakistan that can support government mitigation strategies for education continuity?
- What are the promising data-use practices and strategies for data-informed disaster preparedness planning?
- What do the scalable, best practices look like to design and support schools and communities to develop data-informed, inclusive, and comprehensive adaptation and mitigation strategies that are tailored for local needs and contexts?
- What are the best strategies to engage local community, schools, and learners based on available data?
- What data-use practice and strategies inform data-based adaptation and mitigation strategy design?

- What ensures coherence and alignment between local, state, and national adaptation and mitigation plans?

## Cross-cutting theme 2: Scalable Solutions

### What works to take promising programmes, strategies, and policies to scale within the educational landscape of Pakistan?

#### Broad Research Questions

What **promising programmes, strategies, and policies** have potential to be implemented at scale, with evidence of acceptability/feasibility in broader Pakistan contexts, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability?

What are the **enablers and hindrances** to take promising programmes, strategies, and policies to scale within the educational landscape of Pakistan?

What are the **strategies to ensure and enhance the cost-effectiveness** of promising programmes, strategies, and policies when implemented at scale, with different populations, in different contexts, and at scale?

How can support mechanisms (institutionalisation, resource allocation, political will, champions of change) be streamlined to ensure **sustained impact**?

#### Indicative sub-questions

#### For promising programmes, strategies, and policies that:

- improve drivers of learning and holistic outcomes for marginalised children;
- support teacher and school capacities, regarding pedagogical strategies in multi-grade/multilingual contexts, teacher management and professional development policies, teacher wellbeing and school leadership support;
- ensure teaching and learning continuity and systems resilience when faced with disruptive events; and
- ensure education systems accountability evidence and research uptake, and effective operations and use of data, and monitoring systems,
  - What is the evidence of acceptability/feasibility in broader Pakistan contexts, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of these programmes, strategies, and policies?
  - What are the **enablers and hindrances** to take these promising programmes, strategies, and policies to scale within the educational landscape of Pakistan?
  - What are the **strategies to ensure and enhance the cost-effectiveness** of these promising programmes, strategies, and policies when implemented at scale, with different populations, in different contexts, and at scale?
  - How can support mechanisms (institutionalisation, resource allocation, political will, champions of change) be streamlined to ensure sustained impact?

## Annex B- Research Methodological Guidelines

Research methodologies provide a rationale for the ways in which researchers conduct research activities. The methodology for a research project influences how a research study is conceptualised and designed (Heck, 2004). It is essential to contextualise the research methodology, keeping in consideration the cultural value and traditions that apply in a research context. For instance, Kumar and Pattanayak (2018) point out that in certain Eastern contexts, Western models of research may not be appropriate when seeking to understand Eastern behaviour. Hence, the research methodology should display sensitivity to the linguistic and cultural diversities within the research contexts, in addition to considering the impact of the research on marginalised groups within the context.

The first step while developing the research methodology is to adopt a theoretical paradigm or 'way of thinking' for conducting the research, which is then followed by selecting appropriate research methods for the study. Research methods include quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and mixed methods (Briggs *et al.*, 2012). The spectrum of theoretical paradigms which eventually dictate the choice of research methods ranges from positivism or empiricism, interpretivism, critical theories, postmodernism and finally to pragmatism.

Decisions about research methodology include the following:

- i. Selecting a guiding paradigm or theoretical perspective;
- ii. Specifying research questions;
- iii. Selecting the site, study population, and study sample;
- iv. Developing tools for data collection; and
- v. Finalising procedures for data analysis and interpretation (Benaquisto and Given, 2008).

The following methodological guidance notes provide suggestions for appropriate research methodologies associated with different theoretical perspectives and areas of research concerns related to key research questions. **It is important to note that the proposed theoretical perspectives and research methods in the following four sections are intended as guidelines and should not be taken as restrictive.**

### **Priority Area One: What works to improve drivers of learning (educational access, quality, continuity, coherence) for marginalised children in Pakistan?**

This priority area focuses on collating and generating evidence focusing on four key drivers of learning – access, quality, continuity and coherence. Specifically, it will aim to identify the challenges and opportunities that shape the educational experiences of marginalised children in Pakistan with a view to identify, at scale if possible, what works, how and for whom.

#### **Possible theoretical perspectives**



- *Feminist critical theory* focuses on the ways in which traditions, literature, and cultural values reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women (Flax, 1987).
- *Intersectionality* considers the interconnected nature of social categories, such as race, class, disability, and gender, when applied to a given individual or group of people, which are regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Nash, 2008; McCall, 2005).
- *Social justice theory in education* aims at the equal distribution of resources and treatment to ensure that all students feel valued and safe physically and mentally, regardless of their socio-economic status (Lopez, 2019).
- *Interpretivism* is a research paradigm that focuses on examining research participants' experiences, actions, and worldviews by understanding the meanings they give to these, which derive from their subjective opinions and personal values (Daniel and Onwuegbuzie, 2002).
- *Pragmatism* is a research paradigm that focuses on the 'what' and 'how' of the research phenomenon, via the application of a strategic combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide practical answers to research problems, rather than accepting the long-standing philosophical divide between qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell, 2003).
- *Critical research perspectives* are research perspectives that are critical of existing intersecting social norms and power structures that are considered to be the root cause of social injustices (Doucet, 2019).

### **Possible research methods**

1. Surveys: Conducting surveys to gather data on the reasons for girls being out of school. Quantitative data can help identify patterns and trends.
2. In-depth interviews: Qualitative interviews with girls, their parents, and community members can provide insights into cultural and societal barriers to education.
3. Focus group discussions: Holding discussions to understand group dynamics within the community.
4. Case studies: In-depth case studies of specific regions or communities can offer a deep understanding of local challenges and potential solutions.
5. Ethnographic studies: These can help us to understand the structures, traditions, and culture of the communities within which girls reside and go to school.
6. Systematic review of girls-focused educational interventions.
7. Policy analysis: This is used to evaluate government policies and their impact on minority girls' access to quality education.
8. Observational studies: Such studies observe classroom environments and interactions to assess accessibility and support for children with disabilities and to

gauge the level of inclusivity and the extent to which children with disabilities are integrated into mainstream education.

9. Stakeholder interviews: Interviewing parents, teachers, and policymakers to understand the barriers to and facilitators of inclusive education for children with disabilities.
10. Mixed-methods approach: This combines quantitative and qualitative data by conducting surveys and interviews to gain a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by children with disabilities.
11. Participatory and collaborative research: Collaborating with schools, teachers, families, and children with disabilities (or organisations of persons with disabilities) to seek their participation in designing and implementing inclusive education strategies and evaluating their effectiveness.
12. Ethnographic research: Immersion in the communities of minority groups to understand their cultural and social dynamics, challenges, and educational aspirations.
13. Participatory action research: Involving community members in the research process, and encouraging their participation to identify their concerns, priorities, and potential solutions.

### **Priority Area Two: What works to strengthen frontline education provision quality through building teacher and school system capacities?**

This priority area focuses on the role of teachers and effective teaching in shaping a child's educational experience. It will focus on research aimed at identifying what works to improve teacher effectiveness for all children especially in multi-grade and multilingual settings, how technology can be leveraged to support teaching, whether and how strategies to support teacher well-being can improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes and how adaptive school leadership can respond to disruptive events.

#### **Theoretical perspectives**

- *Positivism*: A research paradigm that assumes a value-free research environment, in which an objective reality can be studied or explored by a researcher without influencing it or being influenced by it (Sale *et al.*, 2002).
- *Constructivism*: Understanding how teachers can create a learner-centred environment that fosters active learning and critical thinking (Erdal *et al.*, 2021).
- *Social learning theory*: Examining the role of peer interactions and collaborative learning in improving foundational skills (Bandura, 1969; Ata, 2018).
- *Pragmatism*: A research paradigm that focuses on the 'what' and 'how' of the research phenomenon via the application of a strategic combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide practical answers to research problems, rather than indulging in

the long-standing philosophical divide between qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell, 2003).

- *Sociocultural theory*: Analysing social and cultural factors affecting the success of foundational learning, literacy, and numeracy, involving parents and communities.
- *Interpretivism*: A research paradigm that focuses on examining research participants' experiences, actions, and worldviews by understanding the meanings they give to these, which derive from their subjective opinions and personal values (Daniel and Onwuegbuzie, 2002).

### **Suggested research methods**

1. Experimental research: Conducting controlled experiments to test the effectiveness of specific teacher development programmes or pedagogical interventions (e.g. comparing the outcomes of different training methods for a sample of teachers via a randomised controlled trial).
2. Case studies: Investigating schools and classrooms that have successfully improved teaching quality and foundational skills, by analysing the strategies and interventions employed.
3. Surveys and observations: Administering surveys to teachers and students to understand the impact of various teaching methods, and combining this with classroom observations to measure pedagogical practices.
4. Ethnographic studies or participatory research: Attending teacher training classes and recording the responses and reactions of teachers in order to collect in-depth data about teacher development interventions (Kumar and Pattanayak, 2018).
5. Participatory research: Engaging parents, families, and communities to bring about improved numeracy and literacy skills.
6. Mixed-methods research: The use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches, including to collect data from teachers, students, and parents on their experiences with remote learning and the effectiveness of various tools and interventions.
7. Content analysis: Analysis of the curriculum and materials used in remote learning to evaluate their alignment with learning objectives.

8. Participatory action research: The participation of students, families, teachers, and schools to examine the efficacy of low-tech solutions for addressing learning losses.

### **Priority Area Three: What works to develop resilient education service delivery continuity through systems coherence?**

Research under this theme focuses on identifying 'what works' to ensure teaching and learning continuity, especially for the most marginalised, when faced with disruptive events. In doing so, research in this area will examine reforms/strategies that support educators, identify trajectories of educational outcomes (access, quality etc.) of learners before and after disruptive events and focus on which systemic barriers of marginalisation predict these.

Research under this theme will also examine successful practices for system resilience, and factors that shape the (in)coherence of the policy landscape to ensure access, quality and continuity. It will also examine local perspectives and the role of parents and communities as well as the key challenges and enablers that allow for coordination and implementation of crisis mitigation and response strategies at various levels.

#### **Theoretical perspectives**

- *Resilience theory*: Examines the factors that contribute to the resilience of an education system during disruptions (Bey *et al.*, 2020).
- *Interpretivism*: A research paradigm that focuses on examining research participants' experiences, actions, and worldviews by understanding the meanings they give to these, which derive from their subjective opinions and personal values (Daniel and Onwuegbuzie, 2002).
- *Pragmatism*: A research paradigm that focuses on the 'what' and 'how' of the research phenomenon via the application of a strategic combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide practical answers to research problems, rather than indulging in the long-standing philosophical divide between qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell, 2003).
- *Social justice theory in education*: This aims at the equal distribution of resources and treatment to ensure that all students feel valued and safe physically and mentally, regardless of their socio-economic status (Lopez, 2019).

#### **Suggested research methods**

1. Climate Impact assessment: Analysing historical and projected climate data to assess the specific threats posed by climate change to the education system.
2. Participatory research: Engaging with local communities to understand their vulnerability to climate change and to co-create adaptation strategies.

3. Policy analysis: Evaluating existing policies and their impact on system resilience during disruptions.
4. Comparative case studies: Comparing the responses and outcomes of different regions or districts within Pakistan to identify successful strategies.
5. Scenario planning: Developing, simulating, or imagining future scenarios related to climate change and pandemics, and assessing the preparedness of the education system to cope with such challenges.
6. In-depth interviews: Conducting qualitative interviews to explore what a resilient education system means for learners, teachers, and local communities in cities, and resource-deprived/rural settings.
7. Focus group discussions: Conducting discussions to get insights into preparedness levels regarding extreme events (e.g. floods), versus slow-onset events (e.g. heatwaves and droughts), and the level of understanding of both.

#### **Priority Area Four: What works to enhance accountability to improve education system cohesion in Pakistan?**

##### **Theoretical perspectives**

- *Positivism*: A research paradigm that assumes a value-free research environment, in which an objective reality can be studied or explored by a researcher without influencing it or being influenced by it (Sale *et al.*, 2002).
- *Pragmatism*: A research paradigm that focuses on the 'what' and 'how' of the research phenomenon via the application of a strategic combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide practical answers to research problems, rather than indulging in the long-standing philosophical divide between qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell, 2003).
- *Interpretivism*: A research paradigm that focuses on examining research participants' experiences, actions, and worldviews by understanding the meanings they give to these, which derive from their subjective opinions and personal values (Daniel and Onwuegbuzie, 2002).
- *Systems theory*: Systems theory offers a framework for developing a holistic understanding of a complex phenomenon by studying the relationships, interactions, mechanisms, and protocols between its various interconnected and interrelated parts (Albert, 2016).
- *Principal-agent theory*: This can be used to analyse how accountability relationships function within the education system (Behn, 2001).
- *Postmodernism*: The perspective that all research and truth is relative and there are no absolute truths or structures in societies (Flax, 1987; Cary, 1999).

## **Suggested research methods**

1. **Mixed-methods evaluation:** Employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to comprehensively assess the impact and scalability of interventions. Quantitative data can include surveys and assessments, while qualitative data can involve interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.
2. **Comparative case studies:** Analysing the experiences of different regions or educational institutions in Pakistan to understand the variations in implementing and scaling educational interventions.
3. **Contribution analysis:** Analysing the relevant data to identify the contribution of a policy reform or development intervention.
4. **Systematic review and comparative analysis:** Comparing the effectiveness of different accountability systems and decentralisation models in different regions of Pakistan, assessing their impact on education service delivery.
5. **Surveys and interviews:** Conduct surveys and interviews with key stakeholders, including educators, administrators, parents, and civil society organisations to gather perspectives on accountability and decentralisation.
6. **Document analysis:** Analysing policy documents, government reports, and educational records to understand the evolution of accountability systems.
7. **Social network analysis:** Exploring the networks of civil society and community organisations involved in education accountability initiatives.

## Annex C– Concept Note Scoring Tool - Rubric

Section 1: To be assessed by the Technical Reviewer						
		Inadequate	Basic	Proficient	Exceptional	Points
<b>1</b>	<b>Proposed Research, Methodology, Approach, and Implementation Plan (70%)</b>					<b>140</b>
1.1	Relevance of research topic/problem to DARE-RC Research Agenda	Not relevant, has no alignment, and unclear connection to the DARE-RC Research agenda.	Somewhat relevant, partial alignment, and loosely connected to the DARE-RC Research agenda.	Relevant, moderate alignment, and clear connection to the DARE-RC Research agenda.	Highly relevant, strong alignment, and direct connection to the DARE-RC Research agenda.	10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	
1.2	Sufficient explanation and analysis of the research context	Inadequate explanation and minimal analysis of the research context.	Basic explanation and minimal analysis of the research context.	Satisfactory explanation and minimal analysis of the research context.	Comprehensive explanation and minimal analysis of the research context.	20
		0-4	5-11	12 -16	17-20	
1.3	Analytical view and synthesis of the relevant literature indicating knowledge gap around the research problem	Limited analysis of relevant literature with no clear identification of knowledge gaps, and superficial synthesis.	Some analysis of relevant literature with partial identification of knowledge gaps, and basic synthesis.	Good analysis of relevant literature with clear identification of knowledge gaps, and satisfactory synthesis.	Excellent analysis of relevant literature with thorough identification of knowledge gaps, and comprehensive synthesis.	20
		0-4	5-11	12 -16	17-20	
1.4	Explanation and justification of Research design and methodology (the proposed research	Inadequate theoretical and practical justification of research	Adequate explanation, basic theoretical and/or practical justification, and a loosely defined research design.	Good explanation, strong theoretical and practical justification, and a well-defined	Excellent explanation, compelling theoretical and practical justification, and a detailed, well-	40

	sample, sampling techniques, proposed data collection methods, proposed data analysis techniques, and the conceptual framework)	methodology, and inadequately defined research design.		research design.	structured research design.	
		0-8	9-23	24 -32	33 -40	
1.5	Explanation of potential value and impact of the proposed study on education policy and practice	Little or no potential value or impact on education policy and practice.	Limited potential value or impact on education policy and practice.	Good potential value or impact on education policy and practice.	Significant potential value or impact on education policy and practice.	20
		0-4	5-11	12 -16	17-20	
1.6	Ethics statement outlining ethical measures for the study	Inadequate ethics statement, lacking key ethical considerations.	Basic ethics statement, covering a few ethical principles.	Satisfactory ethics statement, addressing key ethical considerations.	Comprehensive ethics statement, covering all relevant ethical aspects taking the research context into consideration.	10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	
1.7	Presentation and sequence of research activities promising efficient implementation of the research project	Unclear sequence of activities, and insufficient allocation of resources.	Adequate sequence of activities, and sufficient allocation of resources.	Good sequence of activities, and sufficient allocation of resources.	Excellent sequence of activities, and sufficient allocation of resources considering a wider range of contextual factors.	10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	
1.8	Statement on inclusion of the marginalised (e.g. girls/women, transgenders, individuals with disabilities, members of	No specific plans for marginalised groups (e.g. girls/women, transgenders, individuals with	Vague plans for marginalised groups (e.g. girls/women, individuals with disabilities, members of different religious communities).	Specific plans for marginalised groups (e.g. girls/women, transgenders, individuals with disabilities,	Detailed and targeted plans for marginalised groups (e.g. girls/women, transgenders, individuals with	10



	different religious communities) as research participants or as part of core or/and field research teams	disabilities, members of different religious communities).		members of different religious communities).	disabilities, members of different religious communities).		
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10		
<b>Section 2: To be assessed by the Fund Management Team</b>							
		<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>	<b>Points</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Expertise of Organisation Applicant (15%)</b>					<b>30</b>	
2.1	Reputation and capacity of the organisation to deliver (based on staff, credibility, reliability, industry standing and previous clients list, etc).	No information about employees provided by the organisation.	Details of employees including name and designations are available.		Details of employees with names, designation and qualifications are available.	Details of employees with names, designation, qualifications, and years of experience are available.	10
		Completed projects details are not available.	List of completed projects is available. However, the information about projects donors and budget figures is not available.	List of completed projects is available including project's donors' information as well.	List of completed projects is available including project's donors and budget figures as well.		
		Significant delays in the performance of annual audits as required by the registration law and associated documents <b>(for</b>	Minor/insignificant delays in performance of audits as required by the registration law and associated documents <b>(for</b>	One audit was performed as required by the registration law and associated documents <b>(for private sector and</b>	Two audits were performed as required by the registration law and associated documents <b>(for private sector and</b>		

<b>private sector and where applicable public as well).</b>	<b>private sector and where applicable public as well).</b>	<b>where applicable public as well).</b>	<b>where applicable public as well).</b>
The auditors of the audited financial statements are not registered (no Certificate of Practise) with Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) <b>(for private sector and where applicable public as well).</b>	The auditors of the audited financial statements are registered with ICAP but not enlisted in the List of Practising Firms having Satisfactory QCR (Quality Control Review) Rating issued by Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) <b>(for private sector and where applicable public as well).</b>	The auditors of the audited financial statements are registered with ICAP. However, one of the auditors of audited financial statements are part of the List of Practising Firms having Satisfactory QCR (Quality Control Review) rating issued by Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) <b>(for private sector and where applicable public as well).</b>	The auditors of the audited financial statements are registered with ICAP, and both are part of the List of Practising Firms having Satisfactory QCR (Quality Control Review) rating issued by Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) <b>(for private sector and where applicable public as well).</b>
Significant audit paras/observations (issued by Auditor General of Pakistan-AGP offices) in audit reports of two years with no management responses against the paras in one or two years <b>(for public sector).</b>	Significant audit paras /observations (issued by Auditor General of Pakistan-AGP offices) in audit reports of two years. The paras were not responded adequately by the	Insignificant audit paras /observations (issued by Auditor General of Pakistan-AGP offices) including valid responses by the management in case of one year of audit report <b>(for public sector).</b>	Insignificant audit paras/observations (issued by Auditor General of Pakistan-AGP offices) in two audit reports and the management adequately responded to both <b>(for public sector).</b>

			management <b>(for public sector)</b> .				
		Significant delays in submission of annual tax return.	Minor/insignificant delays in submission of annual tax return.	One annual tax return was timely submitted.	Two annual tax returns were timely submitted.		
		Constant decrease of funds (grants, other receipts etc) in three years (including comparative year information).	Constant decrease of funds (grants, other receipts etc) in two years.	Constant increase of funds in one year (grants, other receipts etc).	Constant increase of funds in two years (grants, other receipts etc).		
		0-1	2-4	5-8	9-10		
2.2	Prior research experience in education, especially in the themes under the DARE-RC Research Agenda.	No evidence in terms of publications, research reports, and other knowledge products relevant to the DARE-RC research agenda.	Limited evidence in terms of publications, research reports, and other knowledge products relevant to the DARE-RC research agenda (at least 2).	Sufficient evidence in terms of publications, research reports, and other knowledge products relevant to the DARE-RC research agenda (at least 5 products).	Substantial evidence in terms of publications, research reports, and other knowledge products relevant to the DARE-RC research agenda (more than 5 products).		15
		0-4	5 -8	9-12	13-15		
2.3	Research collaboration with and among public sector universities, engagement of early career researchers in all stages of research and or applicants from women-led universities and research institutions and	No evidence of any of the following  I. Collaboration within or among universities. II. Collaboration with public sector universities. III. Inclusion efforts in the research	Evidence on at least one of the following  I. Collaboration within or among universities II. Collaboration with public sector universities. III. Inclusion efforts in the research process.	Evidence on at least two of the following  I. Collaboration within or among universities. II. Collaboration with public sector universities. III. Inclusion efforts in the research process.	Evidence on all of the following  I. Collaboration within or among universities. II. Collaboration with public sector universities. III. Inclusion efforts in the research process.		5

those which are geographically remote.	process.				
	0-0.5	1-2	2.5-4	4.5-5	
<b>Section 3: To be assessed by the Research Team (Deputy Research Director &amp; Research Managers)</b>					
	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>3 Management Structure and Key Personnel (15%)</b>					<b>30</b>
3.1 The composition of the proposed team reflects a range of diverse expertise and experience required for undertaking the proposed study and the work division amongst the proposed team members:	The skill set and the expertise of the proposed team members are not well aligned with the research methodology.	Some diversity and expertise of proposed team members, moderate gaps in essential skills.  The skill set and the expertise of the proposed team members are somewhat aligned with the research methodology (some gaps in essential skills).	Excellent diversity and expertise of proposed team members, comprehensive coverage of all essential skills.  The skill set and the expertise of the proposed team members are aligned with the research methodology (moderate gaps in essential skills).	Excellent diversity and expertise of proposed team members, comprehensive coverage of all essential skills.  The skill set and the expertise of the proposed team members are comprehensively and well aligned with the research methodology.	15
Lead Investigator/Researcher should demonstrate experience of leading high quality research	Lead Investigator/Researcher does not demonstrate experience in leading high quality	Lead Investigator/Researcher has some experience in leading high quality research projects	Lead Investigator/Researcher has adequate experience in leading high quality research projects	Lead Investigator/Researcher has excellent experience in leading high quality research projects	

	projects	research projects				
	The Lead Investigator/Researcher should have an affiliation with academia or a connection with an academia-based research network.	The Lead Investigator/Researcher does not have an affiliation with academia or a connection with an academia-based research network	The Lead Investigator/Researcher has an affiliation with academia or a connection with an academia-based research network	The Lead Investigator/Researcher has an affiliation with academia or a connection with an academia-based research network	The Lead Investigator/Researcher has an affiliation with academia or a connection with an academia-based research network	
		0-4	5 -8	9-12	13-15	
3.2	Credibility of the research team i.e. scholarly outputs such as a minimum 2 peer-reviewed published research articles	Limited credibility, or weak quality publications in high quality peer reviewed journals.	Some credibility, 1-2 publication in moderate quality peer reviewed journals.	Good credibility, 1-2 publications in high quality peer reviewed journals.	Excellent credibility, with more than 2 publications in high quality peer reviewed journals.	10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	
3.3	Workload distribution among the research team	Poor workload distribution, uneven responsibilities.	Adequate workload distribution, but some ambiguity the assigned task based on number of days per team member.	Good workload distribution, balanced responsibilities shared based on number of days per team member.	Excellent workload distribution, optimal balance of responsibilities shared among team members based on number of days per team member.	5
		0-1	1.5 -2.5	3-4	4.5-5	