RESEARCH AGENDA

CO-CREATION WORKSHOP

October 12, 2023
Islamabad

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INAUGURAL SESSION

The co-creation workshop of DARE-RC was organised on 12th October, 2023 at Marriott Hotel, Islamabad. Eminent scholars and academics, government stakeholders in education sector, representatives of civil society organisations and members of the donor community attended this workshop. The key objectives of this workshop were as follows:

- Orienting participants about the DARE project, its scope and implementation mechanisms

- Sharing the draft research agenda – developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders – and solicit inputs from participants to further refine it

- Finalising the research agenda that is reflective of policy needs and community concerns with help of participants representing the divergent stakeholders

The inaugural session was moderated by Naila Baqir, Deputy Programme Director DARE-RC, with Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry, Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, as chair. Representatives of DARE-RC, Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), and Pakistan Institute of Education also spoke during this session. The session started with the welcome note of Abdur Rauf Khan, Country Director, OPM Pakistan. He welcomed all participants and informed them about the objectives of the workshop. He encouraged everyone present in the room to actively participate in workshop's

proceedings as it was a critical activity to set the direction of research planned under DARE. He also introduced OPM to participants as a global management consulting organisation with expertise in education, health, public financial management, data and research. He thanked Aga Khan Institute of Education, SightSavers and University of Oxford, which are consortium partners of DARE-RC.

Harris Khalique, Programme Director DARE-RC, in his remarks apprised participants about the work already done under this project especially the formulation of draft research agenda with help of relevant government stakeholders. Referring to the byline of project's logo – جرات تحقیق ملے – he mentioned that recognising the significance of incorporating evidence into policy making processes is crucial for devising effective solutions. Encouraging a culture that values evidence can improve decision making at policy level. This project not only focuses on bridging the research gap in education sector but also intends to mobilise policy planners and practitioners to use research evidence to improve education delivery in Pakistan. He also thanked FCDO for providing resources for this initiative and government partners for their collaboration.

Kim Smith, First Secretary and Education Team Leader at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), opened the workshop by wishing participants a happy International Day of the Girl Child. She emphasised the UK's commitment to promoting 12 years of quality education for all girls

including those with disabilities and from minority communities. She noted that FCDO is now focusing on quality education, as it is essential for girls to become active citizens and contribute to their homes, markets, and society as a whole. She also highlighted the importance of integrating climate-related thinking into schools, especially in light of the devastating floods in Pakistan last year.

DARE -RC project builds on FCDO's previous collaborations with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Teach for Pakistan, and the World Bank. She also expressed her hope that the research agenda and products will be transformed into simple and accessible language so that everyone can benefit from them.

Dr Zaigham Qadeer, Research Director, Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE), a recently formed government agency with the merger of Academy of Educational Planning & Management (AEPAM) and National Education Assessment System (NEAS) spoke about PIE's recent achievements in mapping out-of-school children and developing a data standardisation framework across provinces. He elaborated that PIE deals with education-related quantitative and qualitative data and has used data from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs) to identify out-of-school children after the 2022 floods, and then used the same data to enroll around 50,000 children in schools. He also thanked FCDO and the World Bank for their previous collaboration in helping PIE revamp its data systems and expressed hope for continued support.

Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry, Secretary MOFEPT, who chaired the inaugural session, reflected on the many policy and practice challenges facing Pakistan's education system. He acknowledged the myriad of issues and perception of bureaucracy as a part of the problem. He thanked FCDO and DARE-RC for launching this project, appreciating its normative nature but stressing the need to understand how it would help policy planners. He cited multiple examples from his daily life, where he was approached by researchers, educationists, and entrepreneurs with proposals to improve Pakistan's education system, often tailored to suit their intellectual and financial interests. For instance, some pitched integrating technology to address access, while journalists wanted stricter regulation of private schools with high fees. The Asian Development Bank proposed public-private partnerships and impact bonds, experimented with in India and Africa, while some quoted research concluding that access was the main issue and could be addressed through virtual coverage. Others argued, without evidence, that governments should invest in foundational learning, while still others advised transforming the curriculum as the only way to bring real change.

Mr. Chaudhry emphasised the need for data to inform better planning, stressing that this project must generate evidence to help decision-makers plan policy reforms, or it would be a futile exercise wasting millions of rupees.

SESSION II: GROUP WORK

Dr Jamila Razzaq, Research Director DARE-RC, and Dr Dilshad Ashraf, Deputy Research Director DARE-RC, gave a comprehensive presentation on proposed research agenda before the group work began. They explained that the research topics are divided into three layers that deal with a) learners – where the focus is on girls, CWDs and children from minority / marginalised backgrounds , b) learning environment – classroom environment and the suitability of the elements of learning in a classroom to cater the varying needs of students and c) learning system – accountability, policy space and systems to reform education sector. Eight themes, clubbed under each of the 3 layers, followed by key research questions were also identified in this presentation that are developed in consultation with the key stakeholders. Dr Jamila while presenting this research agenda mentioned that the aim of DARE-RC was to bring an academic rigour to research products while building on the strength of core consortium partners and the thought leadership of Thematic Leads. Knowledge partners would also be crucial to ensure that RC's research products are relevant, academically rigorous and solution oriented. She also mentioned that conceptual framework was essential for every research and DARE-RC's conceptual framework is an emerging document and would be finalised as progress is made on the research agenda. Before inviting participants to the group work, she also mentioned that a moderator and rapporteur would be joining each group and they would help moderate the discussion as well as summarise the deliberations of group work.

FINDINGS OF GROUP WORK

Layer 1: Research questions focused on understanding the learning experience of individual learners, especially the most marginalised children

Theme 1. Examining Girls' Education in Pakistan

Q 1.1 What works to ensure girls have equitable access to 12 years of quality education?

Sub-question 1.1.1: Which interventions improve access, attendance, participation, and completion of education for girls?

The first issue that group work aimed to explore the relevance of vis-à-vis sub-question 1 was **'the impact of school proximity'**. All groups marked it as **high priority** being a key research area in terms of its significance to improve access, attendance, participation and completion of education for girls. While the groups considered it relevant for all geographic locations, remote areas of Sindh, Balochistan and KP emerged as the most preferred regions for this research question. Some groups also recommended to further sharpening the focus of this question by prioritising districts like Torghar, Kohistan and NMDs in KP, and remote districts of Balochistan. One group identified Gilgit Baltistan and other parts of Northern Pakistan where this research could be more useful. Recognising the fact that it would not be possible to provide school infrastructure everywhere, particularly in the case of scattered populations, participants proposed to conduct research on the use of technology as an alternative and cost-effective method of girls' education.

Participants of group work also identified curriculum revision and resource allocation for the mobility and safety of girl students as policy actions linked with this research question. While there were multiple studies – without any formal titles mentioned – quoted that dealt with this topic, most significant ones were an ethnographic study by LUMS and Redding University, World Bank's access to education study (2023), and Anita Ghulam Ali's work on innovative solutions to address the issue of access to school.

The second issue within this question that group work discussed was **'the impact of eliminating the cost barriers'.** Majority of groups marked it as **high priority** with exception of two groups who graded it as medium level priority. Majority of groups found it relevant for all provinces, especially the rural districts; however, one group considered Balochistan to be more pertinent for this research area given its peculiar economic situation and its greater reliance on federal government for resources. Participants figured that designing vocational training programmes was connected with the impact of eliminating cost barriers for students who were exposed to child labour. In larger context, resource mobilisation from international donors and budget allocation were some other policy actions closely related to this research question. One research study mentioned in group work that delved into this area earlier was World Bank's publication 'Smart Buys'. One group also suggested that around PKR 645 trillion are needed to bring girls back to school but title of the study that calculated this cost was missing.

The third issue discussed in group work under this theme was **'the impact of improved school facilities'**. Here again, majority of groups ranked it as **high priority** area with exception of two groups who thought it was a medium level priority. While participants felt the impact assessment of improved facilities in schools was needed for all provinces, some considered it more relevant for Quetta, Khuzdar and Pishin in Balochistan, Thar in Sindh and districts in South Punjab. There was a particular mention of good teachers that motivated female students to attend school even if other facilities were missing or in dismal condition. Some participants were also of the view that improvement in school facilities was directly proportionate to the improvement of girls' enrollment and termed it as a district-specific issue. They gave an example of one district among NMDs where girls'

enrollment was 13% whereas another district within the same region had it at 63% *(however other cultural norms/barriers that may have influenced this situation in these districts were not reported)*. Policy actions that this research area would have implications for were resource mobilisation and budget utilisation as earmarking resources and their spending on the ground both are important.

The fourth issue that this question entailed and discussed in group work was **'the impact of inclusive and equitable learning environment and teaching learning approaches'.** With the exception of one group, all other groups ranked it **high priority** and found it relevant for all regions. There was, however, an additional emphasis on female students from erstwhile FATA and those who are refugees as they were usually discriminated against in schools, particularly outside their native districts. Policy actions identified to be linked with this research area included prohibiting corporal punishment, revising the curriculum to make it more inclusive, making trained teachers available who could help nurture and sustain an inclusive and equitable learning environment, and producing more research to unearth the implicit barriers that hinder inclusive environment in schools.

Participants also identified some other issues that needed to be added under this research question – other than these four issues mentioned above. These included:

- Analysing the issue of proximity vis-à-vis topography and weather conditions
- Impact of medium of instruction (*High priority, relevant to all provinces*)
- Impact of socio-cultural barriers – particularly perceptions of men and boys – that impede girls from going to schools *(High, all provinces)*
- A revisit/gender analysis of the curriculum and textbooks, teacher training (sensitisation on gender norms) and assessment elements in this regard
- Exploring the connection of education to the labour market (by extension investigate elements prompting parents to send girls as domestic help and boys are sent to the labour market *(High, all provinces with focus on South Punjab)*
- Exploring girls' tendency to complete matric and intermediate and become teachers while boys of the same households remain out of school (Do girls/women have to handle domestic chores and boys/men have to run households, therefore, they need skills and

earn more and that become a reason for their leaving schools earlier as compared to girls?) (gender division of labour, caregiving versus providers)
- Impact of minimizing the urban-rural divide in terms of access to education facilities (*Medium, all provinces*)
- Impact of constructing middle and high schools for girls on increasing access *(High, all provinces)*
- Impact of stipend programmes on the attendance level of girls *(High, Punjab)*
- Impact of family background on decisions to continue education beyond primary levels *(High, Punjab)*
- Impact of vulnerabilities e.g., dropout vulnerabilities such as child marriage and does education serves as a protection mechanism from harmful practices like child marriage *(High, rural districts of Sindh, KP including NMDs, and Balochistan)*
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Sub-question 1.1.2: If flexible pathways and community-based education interventions improve getting and keeping girls in schools

Community-based education programmes for girls including those with disabilities was the first area that was discussed in group work under this sub-question. It was relevant for all the provinces and ranked **high priority** research areas by the majority of groups. The group work concluded that this research area would have implications for mobilisation and allocation of resources for creating an inclusive environment for girls with disabilities, providing infrastructure that cater their needs. Participants also stressed the need of primary data collection, with particular attention to inclusive and equitable learning environments. Here again, World Bank's report 'Smart Buys' was referred to as a guidebook that provided cost-effective ways to improve learning environment.

Community engagement and/or information advocacy campaigns was the second area of inquiry discussed in group work for this research question. Only two groups responded to its priority and geographic relevance. One group graded it a **high priority** and the other **medium priority**. Sindh, KP and Balochistan were identified as the regions where the effectiveness of these community engagement initiatives and advocacy campaigns was considered worth exploring. Policy action linked to this research area was mobilising resources and skills to design and

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implement community awareness campaigns, in case evidence confirms it as an effective advocacy tool.

Other issues identified through group work for further research related to this question are as follows:

- Identifying barriers to education for children with disabilities (CWDs), especially where parents of able-bodied children are reluctant to send their children to study with CWDs
- Exploring teachers' willingness to have CWDs in mainstream classrooms
- Exploring the relationship between children's health and their dropping out
- Assessing localized and community-based girls' education contribute to sustained provision of education?
- Assessing the provincial policies/plans for retention and sustainability of girls education

(No grading or geographic focus was reported during the group works for these areas of inquiry)

Q 1.2 How do climate related disruptions and disasters prevent girls from enrollment, attendance, participation and completion of school education?

The first issue discussed in group work for this question was **if some pedagogical practices can create high levels of environmental consciousness and resilience among students, especially girls and the marginalised?** Majority of groups graded it as **high priority** research area relevant to all provinces but mostly for disaster prone areas. Some groups further deliberated upon the areas of geographic focus and identified areas affected by smog in Punjab, fog in Punjab and KP and higher temperatures in Sindh including district Thar. Policy actions linked to this question included identifying mechanisms for remedial learning and a revised education cycle/timeline for schooling. The groups discussed that climate-related disruptions and geographical diversity within Pakistan present a unique challenge for girls' education. Natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, can significantly disrupt the school infrastructure and pose risks to the safety of students, making it difficult for girls to enroll, attend, participate, and complete their education. In areas susceptible to climate-related disruptions, groups also discussed the home-schooling initiatives introduced as a response as well as blended learning programmes for girls and CWDs. However, these initiatives are localized and generally face resource limitations, and not always equipped to address the diverse needs of girls and CWDs affected by climate crises.

The second issue discussed was **if some activities in classrooms can create high levels of environmental consciousness and resilience among students, especially girls and the marginalised?** One group was of the view that this question was similar to the earlier question and both should be merged as one. However, majority of groups again considered it **high priority** research area and termed it relevant for all provinces especially the disaster-prone areas. Here again the major policy action linked to this area of inquiry was resource allocation for infrastructure of schools to make them environment and learning friendly.

The groups proposed the following topics to be added to this research question:

- Exploring the impact of constructing middle and secondary schools closer to the communities that are prone to climate crises.
- Assessing how the curriculum tackles this issue/integration of DRR methods in the curriculum?
- Exploring the potential of inflation (hiking-up costs of schooling) and reducing buying power especially post COVID as impact of disasters on girls' education

All the issues that will potentially be explored under theme 1 of this layer are considered high-priority and relevant to most areas of Pakistan. However, most areas where these research questions are more pertinent include NMDs (especially Torghar and Kohistan), remote areas of Balochistan (including Khuzdar and Pishin), Sindh and South Punjab. Mobilisation and allocation of resources was identified as the most significant policy action linked with multiple research questions on issues of school proximity, cost barriers, impoverished school facilities, awareness raising campaigns and creating a safer and accessible learning environment for children in general and girls and CWDs in particular. Other key policy actions linked with these research question include revisiting the curriculum, corporal punishment policy and practice, and education cycle/timelines in case of climate crises. Participants also suggested range of topics associated with research questions under this theme that they thought should be looked into while finalising the DARE research agenda. These topics are provided against each question in the detailed report above.

Theme 2. Examining Girls' Education in Pakistan

The second theme particularly focusses on teachers' capacity to cater the needs of CWDs and factors contributing to improve the learning environment for them. All issues related to these two questions were ranked high priority with exception of one factor – personal/support for resilience to improve learning environment – that was ranked as medium to low priority. The policy actions linked with research questions under this theme include revisiting the inclusion policy often separated from the formal education system, and investment for teachers training and provision of accessible infrastructure at schools. The need for integration of CWDs in formal school system was also reiterated as both research topic and policy action throughout the group discussion. Here again, a list of topics is suggested to include in the research agenda that is given in the preceding text.

Q 2.1 If teachers are prepared to ensure inclusion of CWD in the learning experience in their classrooms

The first issue that was discussed in group work under this research question was **teachers' understanding, competence and skills to use inclusive pedagogy**. Four out of six groups ranked it a **high priority** (the other two groups did not mark the priority column) and considered it relevant to all regions especially in rural areas. The key policy action identified for this research area was revisiting the inclusion policy that seems divorced from the education realm as it is designed separately and often lacks the required linkage with the education ministry. Likewise, three other issues discussed for this question were ranked **high priority.** These included **teachers' training, resources available to teachers in their classrooms and from their supervisors and support available to teachers from their supervisors.** These again were found relevant across the country, especially in rural and remote areas. Resource allocation for capacity building of teachers in a comprehensive manner was identified as a key policy action linked with these research areas. Other than one research study led by an academic from LUMS that has not yet been completed, no existing study was mentioned in the group work.

Participants also felt that defining and explaining disabilities are foundational challenges that shape our approach to inclusive education. They also discussed that infrastructure preparedness for inclusion remains a significant concern, and it was not solely a matter

of physical infrastructure. Rather, in the pursuit of inclusive education, a profound shift in mentality is often more challenging than providing physical infrastructure. Some participants also indicated the probability of corporal punishment in schools leading to disabilities, making it imperative to re-evaluate disciplinary practices.

Other areas of inquiry that groups suggested to be added under this research question are as follows:

- Mapping of kinds of disabilities and schools that can be categorised as inclusive educational institutions including assessment of available facilities for CWDs
- Identifying/exploring the policy implications of having separate departments for education and special education? Likewise special schools or mainstream schools?
- Assessing the methods for identification of learning needs for CWDs in schools
- Exploring inter-disciplinary engagement of health, education and social welfare departments to identify students with disabilities
- How does parental awareness impact learning outcomes for students with disabilities?
- Assessing the state of out-of-school CWDs vis-à-vis learning opportunities

Q 2.2 Which factors contribute towards improving the learning outcomes for children with disabilities

There were three key factors discussed in group work under this research question. The first one was **social/community and family** which was ranked **high priority** by four groups (the other two groups did not rank it). This issue was considered relevant to all provinces particularly Sindh. The second set of factors discussed in this regard was **system/data, financial and training of supervisors.** Here three out of six groups graded it **high priority,** and one as medium priority. They also termed it relevant across the country. The third factor came under discussion was **personal/support for resilience.** This was termed **medium and low priority** by majority of groups.

Groups, during the discussion on this research question, neither mentioned any policy action linked with this theme nor cited any existing research study. Participants during group discussions stressed on

exploring the potential of up ed-tech programmes to measure positive influence on learning outcomes for CWDs, if educational technology is effectively employed. In addition to discussing the above-mentioned factors, participants also highlighted teacher training and identifying disabilities at early stage as crucial factors that could be instrumental in improving learning outcomes for CWDs. Regarding identifying disabilities at early stage, a recent study was mentioned indicating that 70,000 children were at risk of blindness. Participants also emphasized the importance of changing the perception that disability equated to a deficit, particularly in the case of disabilities like blindness and deafness, which might not be immediately apparent. Assessing the preparedness of educational infrastructure and understanding the extent of inclusive practices in schools, especially for disabled students, was another critical aspect of enhancing learning outcomes.

As a result of group work, following areas were recommended to be added under this research question:

- Exploring the possible mechanism to identify, track and enroll CWDs in schools?
- Understanding the impact of interconnected issues on disabilities e.g. linkage between malnutrition and cognitive disability
- Categorising disabilities vis-à-vis mainstream and special school *(which disabilities can be addressed in mainstream schools and which would require special schools)*
- Assessing the infrastructure needs for CWDs that can actually contribute to improvement in their learning outcomes
- Studying the issue of PTSD among Afghan refugee children, especially who migrated to Pakistan after recent takeover by Taliban

Groups did not rank these topics on the basis of priority or mention the most relevant geographical areas.

Theme 3. Children from minority backgrounds

This theme addresses the issues related to students with minority backgrounds. Three research areas that this theme intends to cover are a) roll out of new multi-religious curriculum, b) state of religious education institutions and c) lived experiences of minority students. Except the first one, majority of groups were not able to rank the priority of research questions. While these questions were termed relevant to all areas but KP and Balochistan were identified

as provinces where these issues must be studied comprehensively. Group works suggest that there is a need of curriculum analysis, adoption of good practices like in Sindh, and re-integration of students in religious education institutions into formal school system. Teachers' attitude and minorities' identity were also identified as factors worth exploring that have an impact on students learning. Participants also suggested to initiate awareness campaigns outside schools as well for promoting acceptance and inclusivity that is essential for a healthy learning environment.

Q 3.1 What are the main challenges for reducing social and cultural barriers for children from minorities to have equitable access to and participation in quality education in Pakistan?

Three issues were discussed in group work under this research question. The first issue was **rollout of the new multi-religious education curriculum.** Relevant to all provinces particularly KP and Balochistan, this issue was graded as **high priority** by three out of six groups. The other three did not give any ranking to this issue. Participants also highlighted the need of exploring Sindh as a case study vis-à-vis promoting tolerance among different religious groups. The policy action linked to this research area included introducing inclusion policy, multi-religious curriculum and integration of students from religious seminaries into the formal school system. Some groups also suggested to move a step ahead and analyse the curriculum and its impact in numbers, not just the theoretical concepts. While this topic was termed relevant across the country, some groups suggested KP and Balochsitan where there is more need of such research and policy actions.

The second issue discussed under this theme was **state of religious education institutions of minority faith groups.** Only two groups ranked this issue, one as high priority and the other as a low priority. The group works repeatedly mentioned the integration of students in religious educational institutions in formal schools. Linked with the issue of students in religious seminaries, parents' considerations – usually financial – to send their children to these institutions was also considered worth studying. Participants also stressed upon the need of awareness campaigns that could be instrumental in promoting tolerance and acceptance among communities, ultimately laying the foundation for a more inclusive educational system.

The third issue discussed was **impact of lived**

experiences on children's life and career aspirations, their sense of identity, belonging and wellbeing. There was only one group that marked this issue as medium level priority whereas other groups left it blank.

There was also some discussion on defining 'minority' in one of the groups. They believed in remote areas, erstwhile FATA for example, people whose family trees were not traced were considered minority and excluded from the tribe. Likewise, the migration workers were treated as minority in some regions. However, most groups did not consider these groups as minority and focused attention on people with minority faiths.

Some other areas of inquiry were also identified relevant to this theme and are given below:

- Impact of teachers' perspectives and attitudes on minority children in their classrooms
- How does the caste system in Punjab impact the attitudes of teachers and perpetuation of inequality within the education process – adopt an intersectional approach encompassing religion, gender and caste?
- Assessing the impact of being a minority on drop-out rate and learning outcomes

Layer 2: Research questions focused on the teaching and learning practices in the classroom

Theme 4. Teaching Learning Focusing on Foundational Literacy, Science and Maths

This theme covers three main areas of inquiry that includes effective teaching strategies, alignment of assessment system with teaching practices and role of mother tongue, and imparting foundational literacy and numeracy skills to family and community to improve learning outcomes for STEM. Groups provided varying rating for each question – wherever they did as most groups left these questions unrated. The geographical relevance was not specified either in most cases, however there are some areas regarding effective teaching strategies where Punjab was mentioned where these practices can be piloted. Groups suggest that the concept of tutoring needs to be studied as a remedial approach and for tis scalability. Likewise, the need of independent research to assess the impact of uniform versus single linguistic in multilingual classrooms was emphasized. Group work also stressed upon the need of continual assessment of learning outcomes to evaluate the

effectiveness of these educational interventions. The groups also concluded that instruction and assessment in mother tongue helps students – particularly from marginalised backgrounds – to improve their learning outcomes. There was also a consensus to promote thinking based teaching and evaluating teachers' performance based on SLO, not merely on grades.

Research Q 4.1: What are the **effective teaching strategies** that significantly improve students' learning outcomes in foundational literacy, numeracy and science in schools and how can these be effectively applied in low resourced and multi-lingual and multi-grade schools in different parts of Pakistan?

The first issue that was discussed under this question was child centered/activity based teaching. Five groups provided it a rating of **high priority**, whereas

the remaining one group did not provide any rating. Additionally, one group rated it as relevant to the province of Punjab. Key policy implications discussed here included whether the methods for learning were exclusive, and whether effective learning techniques were used. The issue of whether approaches used in the private sector can be replicated in the public/development sector were also discussed, as was the efficacy of training teachers through diverse programmes.

The second issue that came under discussion was constructivism as an approach in teaching and learning, which was rated as medium by two groups, as low by one group, and left not rated by the remaining three groups. Here, the issue of tutoring as a remedial approach to be upscaled was discussed, since it has worked as a remedial approach before also. The Right of the child to be taught in a language he/she understands was also discussed, as was the recommendation of conducting a comparative study of India and Bangladesh, since both countries have made progress in terms of inclusive curriculum adapted for different languages.

The third issue that was part of this question was problem solving/critical thinking as an approach in teaching and learning in STEM, which was rated high by two groups, as medium by one group, and left not rated by remaining three groups. It was discussed that memorizing and rote learning culture does not promote real learning, and should be discouraged.

The final issue discussed as part of this question was efficacy of educational games as pedagogical tools, which was rated high by three groups and left not rated by the remaining three groups. Groups agreed that this was inexpensive and easy to implement if a little innovation went into program design.

Some generalized points were also raised by the groups. This included that fact that there are some very simple strategies that seem to improve literacy skills and therefore, there is no need for a complex curriculum. Teachers' pedagogical skills and content knowledge needs to be tested, and teachers should be given detailed teachers' guides, that outline the recommended teaching process. Effective teaching strategies can also be achieved through an understanding of the crucial role of the medium of instruction as the foundation for learning. The discussants agreed with the notion that medium of teaching should be the language students are familiar with. It was mentioned that a study was conducted in which it was found out that students who were taught

in their own language performed better than other students. Unfortunately, the neglect of reading in assessments hampers overall learning, and to improve teaching, assessment methods must be reformed, leading to the need for independent research to assess the impact of uniform versus single linguistic instruction in multilingual classrooms. Some groups also opined that multilingual approaches in education pose challenges, particularly in mathematics, affecting students' comprehension. This language barrier hampers foundational learning outcomes, especially in regions with multiple languages. Policymakers were encouraged to adopt a multifaceted approach, encompassing focused teacher training to equip educators with the skills to navigate multilingual classrooms effectively. Additionally, the need for incentives to be offered to motivate teachers to invest in their professional development, thus improving their teaching standards, was also mentioned as a priority. Continual assessment of learning outcomes is pivotal for evaluating the effectiveness of these educational interventions, ensuring positive impacts on students' learning.

Research Q 4.2: If the **assessment system and practice aligned with curriculum and teaching practice** in classrooms? If **Instruction and assessment in the mother tongue** can result in better learning experience for students from marginalized groups

The first issue raised under this question was the alignment of assessment and curriculum, which was rated as high by three groups, low by one group and left not rated by two groups. Groups opined that the curricula need to be revised for better outcomes.

The second issue discussed under this question was alignment of assessment and teaching in the classrooms, which was also rated as high by three groups, low by one group and left not rated by two groups. It was mentioned here that performance and learning outcomes of SESLOAF show that focused learning deliver good results. Teacher require capacity building, which could significantly improve outcomes.

Finally, instruction and assessment in the mother tongue links with better learning experiences of students, especially from marginalized groups, was also an issue that came under discussion within the context of this question. This was rated high priority by four groups and left not rated by two groups. Discussion included focus on the fact that while people though teaching in mother tongue is better, they did feel that

English should be taught in parallel. However, studies and evidence needs to be presented on both.

Groups also discussed how weightage is given to higher order thinking skills up to grade 8 and matric exams conducted by the Federal Board are already SLO-based. Therefore, there was a need to focus on thinking-based teaching. Teachers' performance should thus be based on SLOs, not on grades.

It was also discussed that the challenge of multilingual education also extends to the alignment between assessment systems, curriculum, and teaching practices in classrooms. This alignment is essential for a successful learning experience. Urban areas are found to be more inclusive in accommodating minority students, ensuring they have access to quality education. However, the implementation of educational technology can sometimes inadvertently create barriers between students from different communities, emphasizing the importance of inclusive technology use.

Clustering resources, such as educational materials or teaching strategies, can lead to improved learning outcomes, particularly in regions with limited access to resources. This approach can help create more equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those from marginalized groups.

Research Q 4.3: How can **family and community be engaged and capacitated to enhance the foundational numeracy and literacy skills** of children?

The first issue that was discussed was using traditional knowledge, everyday activities and communal places for services delivery and congregation for foundation learning which was rated as low by one group, high by one group, and left without any rating by the remaining four groups. The role of tuition centers was discussed here, and that they should be investigated in the context of remedial education systems. It is also common for families to give feedback and input about children's education through these tuition centres. Catch up programmes were also deemed useful, especially in their ability to provide foundational literacy and numeracy skills to out of school adolescent girls.

The second issue that was discussed was 21st century skills i.e., resilience, empathy, and problem-solving through community engagement and activities. This was rated as low by one group, high by one group, and left without any rating by the remaining four groups.

General comments included the crucial need to recognize that a bulk of the population resides in cities where multilingualism is prevalent, with children from diverse linguistic backgrounds in the same classroom. While teachers may choose a language as the medium of instruction, the issue often lies in their ability to teach effectively, regardless of the language chosen. To enhance the foundational skills of children, particularly in reading, assessments need to be adapted and changed. There's a need to shift from selective study approaches and tackle the issue of teachers' performance, which often directly impacts the students' learning outcomes. Teachers should thus follow the scheme of study rather than just the timetable to ensure consistency, and independent research is necessary to evaluate the impact of different approaches in multilingual classrooms.

Theme 5. Curriculum and Education Technology in the Times of Crises and Beyond

This theme deals with a significant issue of use of education technology (ed-tech) to promote inclusivity and improve effectiveness within learning environment and education system. Teleschooling was the first example came under discussion where participants quoted research that this initiative did not do much to improve learning outcomes for children. Its use as alternative/remedial measure vis-à-vis the only medium of education is also something worth exploring. The cost effectiveness of such initiatives is again something that groups feel needs to be studied and the success of Khan Baba Academy was also quoted as an example. The groups also concluded that leveraging educational technology should prioritise inclusivity and bridge gaps rather than creating new disparities. Participants were skeptical about the use of ed-tech to improve effectiveness of teachers and education managers because of lack of data that indicates towards the positive impact through its use. However, they suggested to learn from TCF model where ed-tech is implemented as well as initiatives like Teaching at the Right Level (TARL), Taleemabad, and Sabaq where ed-tech is used and have the potential to improve learning outcomes and effectiveness of teachers and schools.

Research Q 5.1: Can Ed Tech be effectively leveraged to promote inclusivity?

The first issue discussed under this question was EdTech for inclusion on the basis of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and other types of marginalization. This was rated as high priority by

four groups and left non rated by the remaining two groups. Groups gave the example of the ASPIRE project, which was a distance education learning initiative, and the TeleSchool Initiative, which was recently rolled out. It may be useful to look into these initiatives and gauge the impact on learning. Comparison analysis from the Teleschool initiative showed that students had little learning through TeleSchool and if a sibling/parent sat with the child as they watched the TV, that affected their learning. Groups also opined that using technology to make access to improve learning needs to incorporate teachers' feedback. Useful reports in this context are "Parental use of tech during Covid in early learning" by Aslam, Jamil, Saeed; and evaluation of the Siyani Sahelian (SS) Programme in South Punjab.

The second issue discussed under this question was Improve learning (case studies of effective interventions during pandemic) in a cost-effective manner, which was rated as low by one group, high by two groups, and left not rate by the remaining three groups. Groups discussed the importance of piloting programs beforehand. In their experience, if a component is free or cost effective, quality declines so there is a need to ensure how to mitigate that. The success of Khan Academy was always discussed, which is free and used widely. In such cases, access plays a great role.

General discussion around the topic included deliberation on urban and rural disparities. While educational technology is valuable, it can sometimes create unintentional barriers between students from different communities. Therefore, leveraging educational technology should prioritize inclusivity and bridge gaps rather than creating new disparities.

Ed-tech is also the most deprived section in education as no one pays attention to its relevance and effectiveness, especially in the post pandemic and floods scenario. Groups suggested that leveraging Ed Tech through blended learning and knowledge platforms can indeed promote inclusivity, especially in the context of literacy and educational foundations

Research Q 5.2: Can proficient use of education technology and digital literacy improve effectiveness of those working in classroom (teachers) schools (head teachers) district education offices, provincial education departments and federal education ministry in their respective system work? If so, how?

Issues discussed under this question included EdTech for effectiveness of teachers, of headteachers, of district education offices, of provincial education departments and of federal education ministry. For effectiveness of teachers, three groups rated it as high priority while the rest did not rate it; for effectiveness of headteachers, one group rated it as high priority and one as low priority, while four groups did not rate it. For effectiveness of district education officers, and of provincial education departments, two groups each rated them as high, while the remaining left them as not rate; and for effectiveness of federal education ministry, all groups left it as not rated.

Policy recommendations included highlighting the importance of Ed Tech in the education system but being mindful of the lack of data on its impact. While PIDE conducted a study, it is seen as one with a flawed methodology. It was also noted during the discussion that the absence of data on learning competencies from Ed Tech is concerning. The need for evidence-based practical models and well-defined KPIs is essential for assessing the impact of Ed Tech effectively. It was also suggested visiting TCF in Karachi, where Ed Tech is implemented, and the importance of policy papers with clear KPIs for measuring the impact of Ed Tech was emphasized.

Additionally, groups pointed to initiatives like the Teaching at the Right Level (TARL) study and platforms like Taaleemabad and Sabaq, which indicate the potential for Ed Tech to enhance learning outcomes and the effectiveness of teachers and schools. Group members were also of the view that the proficient use of education technology and digital literacy can indeed improve the effectiveness of those working in the education system, provided there are well-researched and evidence-based approaches in place.

A national distance learning strategy was introduced, incorporating various technology tools. The policy mentions the launch of multiple channels and a substantial library of educational videos in various languages. The deployment of technology appears to be aimed at improving the overall education system's effectiveness.

Theme 6. System Resilience to Climate Change, Conflict, and Other Challenging Contexts

Research Q 6.1: What does a resilient education system mean for learners, teachers, and local communities in resource-deprived/ rural settings?

What does it mean to have a resilient education system, is it just the education system or whole community engagement?

Sub-questions and issues under this research question were deemed unclear by most groups. However, each group offered their own sub-questions, that they thought would be essential to the substance of the research questions. These questions included the following:

- How can decentralization help with building resilient education systems (especially in KP) to respond to the needs of the community? (the issue of better use of non-salary budgets to empower head teacher to use funds at school level, and access being a major issue, for example in merged areas in KP)
- Do measures set up by government to minimize climate change risk even work? (the issue of school safety framework, which was a bad example as when investigated, it turned out to only be a notification system that sent out a notification only after a disaster had struck. It was not a proactive measure, as originally publicized and thus had little use.)
- How are education systems in Pakistan monitoring, assessing, and responding to the impacts of climate change/ disaster/ crisis at local/ school levels?
- What/how do the learners learn about the impacts of and respond to climate change/ disaster/ crisis at local/ school levels?
- What/how do the teachers learn about the impacts of and respond to climate change/ disaster/ crisis at local/ school levels?
- What/how do the teachers learn about the continuity of teaching and learning during climate change/ disaster/ crisis?

The groups also deplored that the curriculum taught to students lacks capacity to tackle the aftermaths of a crisis whether it is a man-made or natural calamity. In fact, it does not tell students how to cope with a situation that is resulted from a calamity or a crisis. It was noted that disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management experts are needed who could share their inputs to enrich the curricula in view of the dangers posed by natural calamities.

The groups also emphasized the impact of climate change, extreme weather events, natural disasters, and emergency risks on the education delivery system. These crises can disrupt education and raise questions

about the system's responsiveness to such emergencies.

Research Q 6.2: How prepared and capacitated are teachers in building knowledge, understanding and responsiveness about climate change among their students?

The first issue that was discussed under this research question was specific trainings and CPD activities for teacher in building their knowledge and responsiveness about climate change. This was rated high by three groups, low by one group, whereas it was left not rated by two groups. Groups recommended here that more work is needed on CPD activities, related to life skills, first for teachers and then for students. Psychological pressure and mental well-being also need to be focused on. School safety framework and curriculum should also be reviewed and revised accordingly

The second issue that was discussed under this area was specific trainings and CPD activities for teacher in building knowledge and responsive about climate change among their students, which was rated high by two groups, low by two groups, and left not rated by another two groups.

The third issue discussed was the engagement of teachers in preparedness and response plans, which was rated high by two groups, medium by one group, and low by another group. Two groups left the issue not rated. Here, groups mentioned that curriculum on climate preparedness and safety response plans can be part of teachers' Continuous Professional Training.

Finally, the last issue discussed under this area was engagement of students in preparedness and response plans, which was rated high by three groups, medium by one group, and left not rated by two groups.

Some general comments from groups included that, preparedness for the continuity of education should be ensured to minimize learning loss during emergencies. There is also the need to gauge the effectiveness of plans and programs already implemented.

Early warning systems and linking risk preparedness to Ed-tech should be prioritized. While work has been done on response and mitigation, preparedness continues to be a neglected area.

The capacity of teachers in building knowledge and responsiveness among students was questioned by the groups. They feared the teachers are not capacitated enough to conduct awareness campaigns. They are rather not sensitized about the climate change threats. Hence, expecting them to capacitate students on this

issue is beyond their existing skill set.

Research Q 6.3: What content is included in the curriculum on climate change in Pakistan? What is the efficacy and impact of any materials being used in schools and/or non-formal learning programmes?

The first issue under discussion in this research question was content about climate change in curriculum and textbooks, which was rated medium priority by one group and left not rated by all other groups. Group participants opined that content on climate change is there in textbooks, but its translation and application of applied knowledge is required. Instead of written text there should be project-based learning.

The second issue under discussion in this research questions was efficacy of content about climate change being used in schools, which was rated low by one group and high by one group, but left not rated by the remaining four groups.

The third issue under discussion was efficacy of content about climate change being used in nonformal learning spaces, which was rated low priority by one group and medium priority by another, and left without any rating by the remaining four groups.

Some participants observed that the existing curricula is devoid of any significant material on climate change.

Groups also pointed out that this was the first mention of non-formal education in the workshop, and should be included in other themes as well.

Research Q 6.4: How responsive is education delivery system is to national, regional, and local emergencies including recurrent /annual crises? How climate change, extreme weather events, natural disasters, conflicts, and other emergency risks are recognized, assessed and responded to?

Major discussed under this research question included responsiveness for education service continuity in floods, in extreme weather events, in conflict, and in emergency risks. Two groups rated responsiveness for education service continuity in floods as high priority, and the rest of the groups left it not rated; two groups rated continuity in extreme weather events as high priority, and the rest of the groups left it not rated; two groups rated continuity in conflict as high priority, and the rest of the groups left it not rated, and one group rated continuity in emergency risks as high

priority, one groups rated it as low priority, and the remaining four groups left it blank.

The discussion emphasized the impact of climate change, extreme weather events, natural disasters, and emergency risks on the education delivery system. These crises can disrupt education and raise questions about the system's responsiveness to such emergencies. The existing education system does not have systems in place to preempt a natural calamity, respond to it, and minimize its impacts. This was seen especially during the recent floods. Even gauging the scale of destruction inflicted on the educational infrastructure in the affected districts took a very long time. Families and children in some districts have not returned. Schools in some of the affected areas in Sindh still have not been rebuilt. So, the discussants were of the view that there is no mechanism in place to recognize and respond to natural disasters and extreme weathers.

Groups also rated the issue of system for risk assessment and response preparation: one group rated it as low priority and one rated it as high priority, while the others left it not rated.

Layer 3: Research questions focused on understanding the macro functioning of the system and how the education system builds and sustains reform, scaling up and accountability

Theme 7. Education System Implementing promising pilot interventions at a scale

This theme mainly deals with gathering case studies on different initiatives in four provinces and Gilgit Baltistan. Only one group assessed their priority and ranked them as high priority. The common finding coming out of these discussions was creating a robust monitoring system and continuous feedback mechanism to gauge the effectiveness of these initiatives in real time. Other than that, the groups also pointed towards the significance of public private partnerships and collaboration between academia and industry to bring system and environment related reforms. Challenges discussed under this theme include assessing the system gaps, dearth of financial resources and lack of understanding on needs of teachers and students

Q 7. What are the key features of successful pilot interventions and in the process where these have been significantly scaled and sustained in the system?

The first issue that the group work aimed to explore was **Case studies for gathering evidence on KPK- SLO-based teacher training and student assessment in KPK, ECE classes**. None but one group completed the rating for this issue and rated it as **high priority**. There were also recommendations on what must be done should this initiative be taken further, which included setting up an M&E unit to conduct surprise visits, maintain attendance logs and gauge whether it improved attendance. It was also recommended that exam reform must be evaluated to see why it did not work.

The second issue that the groups aimed to explore was **Case studies for gathering evidence on:**

Punjab- ECE. Only one group completed the rating for this issue and rated it as **high priority**. Recommendations were based on the introduction of M&E Structures that should be piloted and upscaled, and that the Punjab non-salary budget should be taken from pilot stage to a proper scale-up. Groups also suggested that merit-based teacher recruitment systems should be put into place along with free textbooks distribution, classroom-based monitoring and multiple textbook policy. Regarding research studies, a group mentioned that findings from the case

studies can be replicated in other provinces such as KP where JICA and UNICEF are involved in ECE related interventions.

The third issue that the group aimed at exploring was **Case studies for gathering evidence on:**

Sindh- Headmaster cadre programmes, GRACE programme, and only one group rated it, and rated it as **high priority**. There were recommendations about education to be divided into 4 cadres with different recruitment rules. A headmaster cadre programmes was not tested for scale up, and so limits the possibility for it be implemented at a mass level. While exposure of teaching was present, there was a need to appoint training specialists. A total of 1,200 posts were created for ECE in Sindh which resulted in good results. As for research, a particular group shared that the IBA testing study, and the AKU ID Karachi comparative study between Sindh and KP were recommended entry points.

The fourth issue was the **Case studies for gathering evidence on: Balochistan**, which again was rated by only one group, and rated as **high**. Recommendations included development of a real time monitoring system to see how many students were present, and a pilot for this was conducted by UNICEF. It was also important to gauge the ideal strength required since one teacher cannot be moved from one point to the other since their hiring contracts are made through a bureaucratic process. Since teachers salaries were deducted in case of unexplained absences, a lot of teachers had opted for early retirement or had been terminated. Proposals also included adopting the ECCE Model and taking the Teacher Professional development from cluster to CPD model. There was also the need for a sector plan development and updation model, with real time school monitoring system (BEMIS).

The fifth issue was the **case studies for gathering evidence on: GB**, and was rated by only one group, and rated as high. Recommendations included setting up of IT labs and provision of pink buses, and outsourcing of 1000 teachers.

Some general comments in this regard were also provided by the groups. Discussions indicated the features of successful pilot interventions that have been significantly scaled and sustained in the education system. Notable initiatives include the introduction of digital labs and IT infrastructure in schools, blended learning programs, and the establishment of local language-based educational projects. Participants stressed that successful interventions are often characterized by their ability to improve learning outcomes, particularly when students are taught in their local language. They also touched upon the public private partnership model and emphasized the need to know how successful PPP models vis-à-vis macro functioning of the system can be. However, they identified the need for more comprehensive research and data integration to assess their impact. The role of vocational training and skills integration into mainstream education, aligning research with real-life problems, and creating a national vision for education were also identified as essential considerations for achieving sustainable scaling of successful pilot interventions. Additionally, there the need for more experimental research, focusing on learning outcomes, intervention processes, and the impact of educational technology models, with an emphasis on early childhood education projects, was stressed upon. Collaboration between academia and industry and addressing issues related to access and retention were deemed crucial for improving the research culture and ensuring the reliability, access, and standardization of research outcomes in the education system. Challenges identified included assessing the current state of education, determining future objectives, estimating required financial resources, identifying shortcomings, and understanding the distinct needs of both students and teachers.

Theme 8. The Wider Education System – Accountability

This theme intends to explore the issue of education sector accountability mechanisms at multiple levels – from formal accountability system at school, district and provincial level to citizens led accountability initiatives. Most groups (4) rated areas of inquiry listed under first question as high priority and considered it relevant to all geographic locations. The policy actions linked to these research questions included implementation of available accountability mechanisms, piloting the newer citizens led accountability mechanisms using models from South Asian and similar context global practices. Financial accountability also surfaced as an important issue that

needs to be looked into and linked to both budget allocation and utilisation processes. The role of HEC also came under discussion and the groups felt the need to revisit its role, the way it regulates institutions and award scholarships. Most groups did not rank the need of exploring the potential of successful citizens led accountability models within Pakistan/South Asia/ globally or ranked them. One group ranked need to explore Pakistani models as high priority whereas another group ranked the need to study South Asian models as low priority. The examples they suggested that should be studied include that of Sindh Education Foundation, BRAC, AKF, and integration of DRR aspect in Philippines, Nepal and Japan.

Q 8.1 What specific administrative and cultural factors at the community, school/ district and provincial levels facilitate or hinder the enactment of accountability for quality learning experience of all children in schools?

The first issue explored by the groups in this question was the **purpose and understanding of accountability as it exists and as it should be**. Four groups rated it as a **high priority**, whereas two remaining groups did not provide any rating. Key findings and suggestions included that learning and adaptability are completely missing and that teacher absenteeism is an important issue but the problem is more complex than it seems. For these, meaningful measures are missing. Inclusive dialogues at all levels should be prioritized, since accountability needs an inclusive approach where the atmosphere is developed in a way that everyone sits together and comes up with solutions. Some accountability measures that were recommended included transparent data processes and transparency in awarding PERs (Performance Evaluation Reviews) and ACRs (Annual Confidential Reports). Financial accountability was a separate issue altogether, for which it was required that both budget utilization and allocation be made efficient. Finally, there was a need for the accountability mechanisms of HEC to be revisited and redefined.

The second issue explored by the groups was the **role in ensuring accountability by the key actors i.e., students, teachers, headteachers, district, and local officials, teacher union and SMC office bearers and parents.** Four groups rated it as **high priority**, whereas two remaining groups did not provide any rating. Recommendations included school level accountability for its budget and people should come through the parents. There were teacher management committees in certain areas where problems were discussed with

the community and parents, and after agreement, problems were solved, and this approach has shown good results. Furthermore, local governments and community should be engaged in accountability measures.

The third issue under consideration was **power dynamics, flow of information, accessibility of mechanisms, and feedback loops**. This was also rated by four groups as high priority, whereas two remaining groups did not provide any rating. Recommendations included conducting comparative study of the M&E systems between provinces to test their efficacies.

Groups also highlighted some general observations, including the overarching issue of accountability within the education system. They noted that policy documents often lack sufficient accountability checks, and that the lack of accountability is the main reason policies often fail in achieving the desired targets. The subject of accountability mechanisms of the HEC were also noted with skepticism, and participants proposed that, during recruitment, individuals should specify whether they want to become researchers, teachers, or both, with a defined percentage of their time allocated to each. The importance of tracking total education expenditures and the need to hold institutions accountable for the money they receive from the HEC was also emphasized. Concerns were raised about existing accountability mechanisms not being effectively manifested due to coordination issues and the importance of identifying and addressing these gaps through collaborative efforts involving local governments and communities in the decisions related to accountability were also highlighted.

Q 8.2 What community and citizen led organizations have unique models of accountability based on their contexts? What can be learned from these models?

The first issue discussed by the group was **successful examples and review of their sustainability and scalability in Pakistan**. One group rated it as high priority, one group rated it as medium priority, while four groups did not provide any rating. Recommendations included the model of the Sindh Education Foundation, which showed good results in terms of curriculum, enrolment and learning.

The second issue discussed by the groups was **successful examples and review of their sustainability and scalability in the South Asian region**, which was rated as low priority by one group, with the other five groups not providing any rating.

Recommended models included BRAC, AKF Schools, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) (Philippines), DRR (Nepal) and DRR (Japan).

The third issue discussed the groups was **successful examples and review of their sustainability and scalability globally in comparable contexts**, which was rated as low priority by one group, with the other five groups not providing any rating.

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WRAP-UP SESSION

Dr Jamila Razaq in wrap-up session thanked all the participants for providing their insightful inputs to finalise the research agenda on defined templates. She informed the participants that group moderators and rapporteurs had taken extensive notes and a report of this workshop will be shared with participants as soon as it is ready. She also informed that following this workshop, the final version of DARE's research agenda would also be ready and shared with the participants.

Dr Dilshad Ashraf Deputy Research Director DARE RC appreciated the enriching discourse that took place in the group work exercise. She conveyed that additional questions and issues were incorporated into the research agenda as part of the Co-creation workshop's objectives. The draft research agenda was collaboratively developed, incorporating input from relevant stakeholders. Thematic leads from Dare Research Center provided insightful contributions to fortify the agenda. She assured participants that ongoing refinements would precede the execution stage to ensure the agenda's coherence and effectiveness.

Harris Khalique extended his gratitude to the participants, with a special acknowledgment for the representatives of six governments in attendance. Detailing the roadmap ahead, he informed the participants that post-workshop, the research agenda and capacity strengthening plan would be finalized. Subsequently, research grant proposals would be solicited twice during the project's duration. While highlighting PIE as a key partner, Khalique emphasized DARE's commitment to ongoing engagement with provincial departments.

During the Q&A session, the first question inquired about the existence of a provincial Research Advisory Group (RAG) or if decisions would solely be administered from Islamabad. Responding, Harris Khalique clarified that the RAG would represent all provinces, ensuring representative decision-making. Additionally, he shared that a budget of 3.6 million pounds allocated for competitive grants, anticipating rigorous and robust research and policy products.

The second question addressed how research proposals of similar nature but in diverse provincial contexts would be handled. The DARE team responded, stressing openness to diverse proposals based on contextual factors, research themes, and questions.

In response to a query about partner selection, the DARE team highlighted two studies, including evidence gap mapping by Dr. Faisal Bari and institutional mapping by Dr. Fatima Dar, contributing to the decision-making process.

Madad Ali Sindhi, the caretaker minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, graced the concluding session of the workshop as the Chief Guest. Harris Khalique extended a warm welcome and provided a succinct summary of the workshop's initial sessions. In his remarks, Minister commended projects and non-governmental organizations that have long championed the ideals of development and equality in our society. He emphasized their role in addressing issues such as girls' education, discrimination, and violence, even when media coverage was hesitant. Reflecting on a 1943 directive from Sindh's first governor regarding Karo Kari (honour-related killing), the minister expressed concern that such crimes against women persist even after eight decades. Highlighting the historical neglect of education, particularly girls' education, he underscored the imperative for research and evidence generation to inform policymaking in the education sector. The Federal Minister for Education and professional training recognised DARE as a pivotal project in this context.

Saima Anwar, Education Advisor, FCDO, thanked the participants on behalf of FCDO, with special acknowledgment for the Ministry of Education and Professional Training, a longstanding collaborator on various initiatives, and the Minister for Federal Education and professional training for his presence. She remarked that this caretaker set-up – though temporary in nature – presents an opportunity to work on some quick fixes and developing a roadmap that a future political government can take forward. She mentioned that DARE was a newer and interesting project wherein the focus is on fostering the connect between evidence and policy reform and it also underscores FCDO's interest in working with Pakistani institutions on evidence-based policy reform The workshop concluded with these remarks.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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