

ARTICLES OF 2002 - Winter

New DIL Project in Dir

DIL's latest project is underway in district Dir in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. DIL has signed a three-year contract with Khwendo Kor (KK), starting September 1, 2001. The immediate objective is to enroll at least 1,600 girls between 5 to 12 years of age living in rural, marginalized areas of Dir, by opening forty non-formal primary schools.



Potential DIL Students in DIR

Khwendo Kor is a non-profit, non-government organization striving for the uplift of women and children in rural, underdeveloped areas of NWFP. Khwendo Kor is a Pushto word meaning "Sisters Home". The organization was formed in February 1993 and is registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860. KK has also been working with the deprived communities of Peshawar, Karak and Dir to promote micro-economic activities for women and to improve mother and child health care.

Following the US strikes on Afghanistan, anti-NGO emotions ran high, causing KK to scale down its activities. However, the defeat of the Taliban weakened radical sentiments, which made it easier for KK to recruit community support for the project. KK is now more confident about meeting all project deadlines and goals.

Most politico-religious parties vehemently oppose any modern educational programs or activities for girls, posing a constant challenge for DIL. As a result, NGOs are generally perceived as a corrupting influence on the moral fiber of society. KK deals with these prejudices so as not to draw the displeasure of the conservative elements of society, ensuring that all actions and decisions are fully compatible with Islamic teachings. For example, Village Education Committee meetings are held in the mosque after prayers and schools are always inaugurated with recitations from the Koran, the Muslim holy book.

To ensure success of the project, inclusion of government representatives in planning and implementation is considered essential. Linkages have been established with the Education Department to this effect and meetings have been held to brief district and local government officials and organizations about the project. All these parties are actively involved in the identification of villages and in assessing feasibility of the project.

Advanced Schools in Khairpur

The first phase of DIL's Khairpur Project has ended successfully, and the first two batches of girls have passed primary school education. In collaboration with the Indus Resource Center (IRC) and Save the Children Fund (SCF), DIL has now embarked on the second phase of its program: to improve the quality of the existing schools and to provide secondary education to the graduates.

IRC, a highly respected NGO based in Khairpur, was registered in July 1999 under the Societies Act of 1880. Its mission is to bring marginalized communities into the mainstream of national affairs through strengthening community-based civil society institutions. In the Khairpur and Dadu districts, IRC has worked extensively on issues of gender equality, environmental sensitivity and poverty alleviation.

IRC recently carried out a detailed study, of the DIL schools in Khairpur, funded by SCF. The purpose of the study was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the DIL schools and prepare for the next phase by making recommendations for the creation of a quality primary school model.

Till recently all DIL schools were one-teacher, one-room, multi-grade schools, and DIL is acutely aware that this system of educating girls in sparsely populated rural areas has its limitations. In September 2001, IRC took over the running of 25 schools from NOWA. These schools called foundation schools have been divided into five clusters and only teach kindergarten first and second grade students. In addition, five 5-room schools called Advanced Schools have been established to accommodate 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th grade students. The teachers are subject based so that teacher training can be more focused and effective.

Agha Khan Education Services of Pakistan (AKESP) has provided training to the teachers in Math, Science and English. Currently, the teachers are attending workshops conducted by the Education Resource Development Center (ERDC) on Syllabus Design and Academic Calendars.

Transport arrangements have been made for the Advanced School students living at a distance of 2-5 km. Learning Resource Centers have been established that will concentrate on collection and dissemination of teaching and reference materials. An attempt will also be made by IRC to make Foundation schools sustainable by linking them to micro-credit programs.

DIL receives two grants in 2001

DIL has received funding for the Dir project from NetAid, an independent nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation with headquarters in New York. Under the terms of the grant, NetAid will fund the entire project for one year.

A grant was also awarded to DIL in October 2001 by the Levi Strauss foundation. The grant will finance a major portion of the first year's budget of DIL's new Khairpur project.

Room With A View

Tauseef Hyat

DIL's Islamabad office is a modest, one room workplace on the second floor of a building in Sector F-6/3. DIL moved into its present premises in August 2001. As you step out onto the adjacent rooftop terrace you get a fabulous view of the Margalla Mountains, at the foot of which nestles the capital city of Pakistan. But, it is the view beyond the mountains that concerns DIL-villages after villages without schools, five and six year-old girls sweeping floors and carrying water, little boys with sad eyes burdened with adult workload.

It is a cause for alarm that 64% of boys and 75% of girls in the primary school age are out of school. Female literacy at 24% is half that of the male literacy rate, and female enrolment at the secondary school level stands at only 21%, while Pakistan's tertiary enrolment rate at 2.6% is the lowest in South Asia.

Since its inception in 1997, DIL has impacted the lives of thousands of children in Khairpur, Mianwali, Orangi (Karachi) and, more recently, Dir. With four years of rich and rewarding experience, and demand for education continuing to grow, DIL is now looking beyond the multi-grade classroom.

The Executive Director and Program Coordinator of DIL, Islamabad work to ensure that all the projects meet DIL's high standards. The guidance and advice of the Board of Trustees of DIL, Pakistan is sought on policy matters as and when necessary. Listed below are the main responsibilities of the Islamabad office:

Monitoring: The office ensures that regular and rigorous monitoring of all DIL projects is done on quarterly basis. Independent consultants are hired for this purpose and are provided Terms of Reference by DIL to guide them in the monitoring process. After an in-house review of the monitoring report submitted by the consultant, a copy is sent to the partner NGO. Then, in collaboration with them, DIL works towards improving the project by following the recommendations made in the report. DIL's local staff as well as Executive Board Members of DIL, USA visits the projects regularly.

Quarterly Reporting: All the partner organizations submit quarterly reports detailing their activities and progress made by them during the specified period. The report also includes a financial statement for the quarter. The Executive Director scrutinizes the report, and the next quarterly release of payment is made only if the report is satisfactory.

Teacher Education and Quality of Teaching and Learning: Since teachers recruited from the villages do not have the required qualifications for teaching, DIL works closely with the partner organizations to ensure that all teachers in the program are involved in a continuous process of training and that the training is directly impacting the learning process in the classroom. Our teacher training efforts focus on the twin tasks of increasing the subject knowledge of teachers and improving their pedagogical techniques.

Auditing and Finance: DIL is responsible for the annual auditing of all its partner organizations. The organizations have been provided written guidelines by DIL to ensure that standard international accounting procedures are strictly adhered to by them. A well-

reputed independent firm of auditors carries out the annual audit of all projects. The accounts of the DIL office are also audited annually. A part-time accountant has been hired to look after the DIL Office Accounts. Bi-monthly financial statements are sent to DIL, USA. Disbursement of funds to all Partner Organizations is made from the DIL office, on a quarterly basis, after receipt of quarterly reports.

New Projects: The Board of Trustees of DIL, Pakistan, has approved an Eligibility Criteria for the selection of new partner organizations. A selection committee has been nominated to ensure transparency and ascertain that partners selected meet the eligibility criteria. The short-listed projects would be sent to the DIL USA Board for final approval. The board members are also actively engaged in debating the pros and cons of a public/private collaboration, which essentially involves DIL collaborating with the Government of Pakistan in a School Improvement Plan (SIP) for the state school sector. Innovative models of educational success are also being looked at.

The power of education in transforming people's lives is truly immense, in terms of access to better employment opportunities, higher incomes, increased social and economic empowerment and better health care. As an ancient Chinese proverb says:

If you plan for a year, plant a seed; if for ten years, plant a tree; if for a hundred years, teach the people;

When you sow a seed once you reap a single harvest; when you teach the people, you will reap a hundred harvests.

A Teacher's Story

My name is Irshad Pathan, and I teach at the DIL Girls Primary School, in the village of Janveri. The day my father died my life changed completely. Although I was still very young at that time, I had to earn a living to help support my family. I learnt how to sew and found a job at a commercial center.

One day my sewing machine broke down and I had to travel to a neighboring village to have it repaired. The repairman told me that the Government school building in their village was lying vacant because they had no teacher and that a local NGO, NOWA was hoping to open a DIL school on the premises. I applied for the job and was accepted.

Initially, I found the job very challenging, as the community was not ready to educate their girls, let alone accept a teacher from another village. So, I started going door to door to meet with the mothers whose daughters were of school-going age. But, the mothers refused to send their girls to school unless and until the male members of the family agreed. Convincing the male was a hard task, they strongly disapproved of their daughters and sisters attending schools--even though a number of the males I spoke to were educated. It was the response I received from the girls that was most encouraging, and with gradual determination I managed to convince first the mothers and then the fathers to send their daughters to school. During this period I underwent teacher training

which greatly improved my teaching skills. The activity based teaching methods that I learnt were very successful, and soon I had a class full of eager young students. I was even able to collect a nominal fee from each student without a problem.

It was during this time that the Wadero (chief of the community) started to create problems for me. Since he had donated the plot to the Government for the construction of the school, he claimed that he was the master and that everything must be done according to his instructions. I, in turn, invited him to become the Chairperson of the school's Village Education Committee, a position he refused, and work for the betterment of the community. He has not bothered me since!

Courage from Education

Sahida, Abida and Zahida attend DIL Primary School, Khairpur Upper Colony. Their father works as a laborer and their mother does embroidery to make ends meet. Misguided by the entrenched social taboos against female literacy in his community, the girls' father is vehemently opposed to their receiving an education. He forbade his oldest daughter Shahida, age 15, from partaking in the fifth grade examination last year. Indeed, he would like to marry his daughters off as soon as possible. It is solely due to the sheer will and determination of the mother that the girls have been secretly attending school. They hide their books or leave them with the neighbors to avoid a confrontation with their father. Their courageous mother, who attends school meetings while her husband is at work, believes that her husband will come around to her way of thinking once he sees the benefits of the education her daughters are receiving.

San Francisco Chapter Holds Debut Fundraiser

Saira K. Siddiqi

Amid grave uncertainty looming in the aftermath of the September 11th tragedy and the consequent bombing raids over Afghanistan, DIL's San Francisco board nervously decided to go ahead with the planned fundraiser for November 9th . One can say that the courage to do so mainly stemmed from the SF board's commitment to the "children of Pakistan", promising to make a difference in their lives by providing education opportunities for them.



From Left Zar Aslam, Saira Siddiqi, Sara Abbasi, Asma Sheikh & Lubna Sheikh

November 9th was a gratifying experience when seven months of planning finally culminated into a beautiful event with a handsome amount of funds raised for literacy in Pakistan. It was reassuring that the future of underprivileged children of Pakistan did matter after all. The generosity of our Bay Area Pakistani community was heartwarming. The evening's target was set at forty thousand dollars and was exceeded by twenty-three thousand due to enthusiastic participation of the guests.

Asma Shaikh made the opening remarks, followed by Sara Abbasi who delivered a compelling speech about DIL and its achievements. She pointed out that tough it is a new

beginning for the SF area; DIL has already made a substantial difference in the lives of thousands of young children in Pakistan. The speeches were followed by a video presentation of DIL's work in Pakistan. The video touched the audience as it showed the desperate conditions in which DIL is providing hope for families by opening schools for young girls.

The ambiance was dignified and graceful. A lot of effort was made to add an ethnic tone to the décor. Board Members took advantage of their summer travel to Pakistan to bring back "Ajrak" table spreads and colorful "changers" for dinner table centerpieces. Hand-made Leather souvenir boxes made by artisans in the Pakistani villages of Baluchistan were provided to the guests, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Shahida Jaffrey.

Los Angeles Fundraiser

On December 1, 2001, Mr. and Mrs. Attiazaz Din hosted an Iftar Dinner at their residence to raise funds for DIL. A total of \$75,000.00 was raised at the event.

DIL Opens Chapter in Washington D.C.

DIL opened its fifth chapter in Washington D.C. on November 23, 2001. The Board consists of the following members: Mehar Patel, President; Nina Rana, Vice President; Ghazala Siddiqi, Treasurer; Masooma Nabi, Recording Secretary; Mahnaz Ahmad and Natasha Yusuf, General Secretaries; Seema Nawaz and Sabiha Zubair.

The Board Members plan to host their 1st fundraiser on April 27, which will be followed by a second fundraiser in the fall.