

The JAQ Education Trust and Pehli Kiran School System Highlights of FY 2007-08

The JAQ Education Trust is working to promote literacy and primary education among children in low income communities in Pakistan, through a network of non-formal community based schools – the Pehli Kiran School System (PKSS). It is helping increase children's access to the formal school system, safeguard their health, and mobilize communities toward self-help. In addition, the Trust provides financial/safety net support to destitute families for children's education, higher education opportunities especially for girls, emergency health needs, food supplements, shelter needs and seed capital for micro enterprises as needed.

The JAQ Education Trust was formally registered in September 1999, although its activities originally began in 1996. The Trust operates under the guidance of a Board of Trustees, comprising seven Pakistani professionals who bring a diverse range of expertise to its activities.

Pehli Kiran School System Model

The Trust's primary activity relates to the operation of the PKSS, which uses an innovative, low-cost community based approach to provide quality primary education to children in the lowest income communities, residing in some of the poorest '*katchi abadis*' (slum areas) in and around Islamabad. Recognizing the particular needs of these transient/nomadic families, the PKSS has adopted a very flexible approach – taking the make-shift class room to the midst of these communities, allowing a very flexible admission policy, cajoling mostly illiterate parents to send their children, contracting and expanding with the wide variations in attendance – and moving with the community when it is ejected by governmental authority. *This particular target group, along with a low-cost flexible approach, are distinctive features unique to PKSS which sets it apart from other initiatives in the non-formal education sector.* In the absence of a PK school, most of these children would never experience any schooling.

Operating Results for the current year:

- **Eight schools** operational, of which three are afternoon schools.
- Total Student **Enrollment** reached **807** by June 2008 (**34% girls**). Average enrollment was **16%** higher than in the previous year.
- Student **Attendance** averaged **77%**.
- Overall **Pass percentage** was **71%** in the April 2008 final examination.
- **68 students** were **mainstreamed into formal schools**.
 - **14 students** (including three girls) **passed the Class 5 Board Exam** with good grades (1st and 2nd division). About half these students received their entire schooling through the PKSS.
 - Another **58 PKSS students transferred to formal schools at different levels**, and were generally accepted in equal or higher classes demonstrating a good academic standard.
- **PKSS students who transferred to formal schools in previous years, generally continued to perform well**, and some were position holders in their respective classes.

Other Trust Activities

In addition to the PKSS operations, the Trust continued to finance the education of low income students outside the system and provide limited social safety net support to target groups. For the year under review, the Trust provided educational stipends and related support (e.g text books, uniforms, etc) to eighteen students in the Hafizabad area, of whom two completed their 10th grade this year with high grades. It also supported four female students in Rawalpindi, one of whom is a college student.

Financial Affairs

(Note all US\$ equivalent figures have been worked out using the Jan 1, 2008 conversion rate of Rs61 to the US\$)

Proactive fundraising and prudent financial management remain critical for continued operations of the Trust, as its activities are entirely financed by voluntary contributions, mostly from individual donors.

According to the draft financial accounts of the Trust for FY 2007-08, total donor contributions received during the year amounted to Rs 1,850,707¹ (US\$ 30,340 equiv), about 20% less than the previous year. Total expenditures incurred were Rs 2,107,633 (US\$34,551), reflecting an increase of 31% over the previous year. Average cost per student was Rs 2,793 (US\$46) per year, an increase of about 16% over the previous year.

Draft financial accounts of the Trust for FY 2007-08 are being audited by Messrs. Anjum Asim Shahid Rehman, a reputable firm of chartered accountants in Pakistan. Audit reports can be provided on request.

Further PKSS Highlights for 2007 – 2008

Academic:

- Free education², including books & stationary, was provided to all students.
- Classes were held for 27 hours per week.
- The largest part of our student body continues to be in the Katchi (pre-school) and Pakki (Class 1) classes, with about 20% in class 2 and above. This reflects the high turnover of households in our target communities, as well as the successful mainstreaming of older students to the formal system.
- Teaching staff included **19 teachers**, of which 10 work two shifts (morning and afternoon schools), thus maintaining an average **student:teacher ratio of 27:1**. PKSS staff is managed by a Principal, assisted by a school Supervisor. The average qualification of PKSS teachers ranges from an intermediate certificate (12 years of schooling) to a graduate BA/BSc degree (14 years of schooling).
- The PKSS syllabus which follows the Federal Board continues to be adjusted to the community children's needs, particularly at the katchi and pakki levels. The medium of instruction is Urdu, while English is taught from katchi class. Each school has four and a half hours of learning sessions.
- Annual April 08 examination results are very encouraging. The average pass percentage of 71% compares favorably with other public and private schools, particularly in view of the more stringent grading system followed by PKSS.

Nutrition: Students received weekly nutritional supplements comprising milk and fruit.

Medical: Medical kits were provided in all schools to address first aid needs and minor illnesses.

Clothing: One complete uniform outfit (including a shalwar kameez suit, sweater, PT shoes and socks) and a school bag were provided to students in all schools except PK-2.³

School Structures: are developed keeping in mind the transient lifestyles of the communities. These continue to evolve as we balance the need for mobility, structural durability and low cost. Seven PK schools operate in moveable sheds⁴, while one school (PK-2) operates in a rented building. Originally these sheds were constructed using bamboo poles and rafters with canvas and cane roofing. However, these had a high operation/maintenance cost as they were prone to collapse due to harsh weather conditions and termite attack.

¹ In addition, the Trust received an endowment of Rs 850,000 (US\$13,934 equivalent).

² Students contribute to the rental cost of school premises in PK-2, and parents provide the space for our Katchi Abadi schools in the other communities.

³ In PK-2 the somewhat better off households are themselves able to provide children's uniforms.

⁴ A typical school shed of 20 feet by 30 feet can accommodate up to 60 students in a multi-grade setting. Schools have multiple sheds depending on the number of students, and sheds are added as the student body in a school grows.

To address this, the Trust is gradually introducing steel pipe pole (SPP) sheds. However cost remains a constraining factor as a SPP shed is significantly more expensive. This year the Trust provided the following:

- Three new SPP sheds - two in PK-7 and one in PK-4.
- 10 basic sheds were reconstructed for the other katchi abadi schools.
- Green sheets were provided to four schools (PK4, PK-5, PK-6 & PK-7) as a shed siding.
- A new steel cabin was provided to PK-7 for storage.
- PK-2 moved to a more spacious rented facility which has 5 class rooms, a store and a large central courtyard.

Events: Extra-curricular activities remain an important focus of PKSS. This year the following events were held in addition to periodic lectures, quizzes and competitions on special days such as Independence Day etc.

- Students of PK-4 visited 'Lok Virsa' (Folk Heritage) museum.
- Students of PK-3 visited the Islamabad Zoo.
- Milad was arranged in PK-2 and PK-5.
- A 'Meena Bazaar' (discount sale of donated goods) was held at PK-7.
- An annual outing for PKS teachers was facilitated by the Trust.

Sports: Sports Kits were provided to each school. These typically include cricket bats, balls, wickets, foot balls, badminton rackets, shuttle cocks, skipping ropes, etc. Sports periods are held twice a week in all PK schools. This year a PKSS inter-school cricket competition was held much to the children's delight.

Community Participation: PTAs are a backbone of PKSS.

- Monthly parent-teacher (PTA) meetings were held in all PK Schools. Separate PTA meetings were held for women in the more conservative communities (PK 4 and 6).
- PK-5 and PK-7 have been particularly active in school events.
- PTAs actively participated in the distribution of term results every four months, and the annual exam results in April 2008, taking keen interest in their children's progress.
- Detailed household level surveys were initiated in all eight communities during summer 2008 to assess the current level of school enrollment among children of school going age, and to obtain parent's feedback on the quality of education being provided by the PK schools.

Staff Development: PKSS attaches great importance to staff development in recognition of the key role they play in achieving objectives. This year PKSS organized the following:

- Two-week English language training for all teachers in July 2007, following a detailed needs assessment.
- Three-day teacher training introducing new teaching methodologies, and one-day training on team building for all staff in the 2007 summer break.
- Ongoing support to staff for continuing education. Three PK teachers enhanced their qualifications during this period by obtaining higher degrees.

Communication: PK Head Teachers are linked by cell phones and provided regular telephone cards to keep them networked, particularly in view of the spread of school locations. We continue to upgrade our networking capacities. This year a computer with a PTCL Wireless line was installed in PK-2, donated by a trustee.

New initiatives for 2008-09:

- Vocational training for older girls is to be piloted in two schools.
- A computer training facility will be established at PK-2
- A School Management Committee has been established to further streamline school operations. This comprises the Principal, Supervisor and all Head Teachers.