

15 Years Endeavor of Non-Formal Education in Pakistan and its ‘Platform-Based Cooperation’

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Pakistan faces serious issues on education, with huge number of out-of-school children and youth and low literacy rate. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has worked for Non-Formal Education (NFE) sector in Pakistan for 15 years to strengthen NFE delivery mechanism to tackle these issues. The Advancing Quality Alternative Learning (AQAL) project (2015-2020) aimed to 1) establish foundation of effective NFE delivery system, 2) enhance NFE Data Driven Management through NFE Management Information System, and 3) assure quality on NFE and recognition of its learning by certificates. As a result of intervention, the following outcomes have been developed and formally approved by the respective federal and provincial governments: NFE policy, delivery systems (e.g. teacher management system, monitoring system); target specific curriculum and materials (e.g. accelerated education curriculum and materials for primary and middle level, trade-specific literacy materials, literacy cum health materials); assessment tools, equivalency mechanism between formal-nonformal education. Also, during the project, the NFE department/ directorates have strengthened their functions shown as drastically increased budget and staff number.

The unique approach of AQAL is ‘Platform-based cooperation’ which provides flexible and open ‘places’ for provincial governments to invite all stakeholders: governments’ organizations, development partners, NGOs and civil society, to share ideas, resources and networks, and act together towards education issues through NFE means. These platforms were officially established by federal and provincial governments and assured its sustainability. The process of coordination also flourished trust and confidence on NFE sector, so that other development partners show their interests in NFE. The COVID-19 pandemic may create additional number of OOSC and youths with critical health and economic crisis. NFE can provide practical and immediate solutions to not only OOSC but also in-school children to catch up their learning against learning loss due to COVID-19 pandemic.