

Reduced Overcrowding Raises Hope of Reducing Dropout Rates in Pakistani Schools

UK Aid-assisted Humqadam-SCRIP represents a big step forward to address the persistent and long-neglected issue of overcrowding by transforming public schools into joyful learning places to not only bring more students to schools, but ensuring a fulfilling experience.

The Government Girls Primary School (GGPS) Sohbat Abad in District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province is an only girls' public school within a 3 Km radius. More often than not, for the lack of classrooms and toilets, girls were studying out in the open exposed to harsh weather and using the toilet out in the open fields.

For over two decades, the school has had only two classrooms necessitating multi-grade teaching. The sole functional toilet for over 130 students further aggravated the disruptive educational environment.

Fatima, an 11-year old student of Grade 5, said, ***"I wonder how I survived the cramped and noisy environment, waiting for the school bell to set us free"***

Humqadam-SCRIP stepped in at an opportune time, providing a much needed reprieve to the over-burdened staff and the students. Construction of 2 additional classrooms and 3 toilet blocks addressed the urgent needs of the growing student population. As a result of these interventions, previously dropped out students have re-enrolled. The student population has increased to 165 students, whereas, the student: classroom ratio has dropped to an ideal 40:1 ratio.



The new classroom block provided by UK Aid has helped to bring back over 35 dropped out students back to class

Ms. Shaheen, Principal at GGPS Sohbat Abad said the addition of new classrooms and toilets have brought a sharp rise in student attendance, which has gone up from 70% to 90%, and accompanied by a significant decline in teacher absenteeism. ***"It is heartening to see the community take interest in this school. After the infrastructural improvement, attendance rate has shot up and we anticipate at least 50 more students will enrol in the coming session."***

Humqadam-SCRIP is the largest UK Aid infrastructure programme in the world. With an aim to improve infrastructure in government schools in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces of Pakistan. This programme is a part of the £420 million [Punjab Education Support Programme \(PESP\) II](#) and the £283 million [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Programme \(KESP\)](#), large and ambitious programmes which represent a collaborative effort between UK Aid, Australian Government, and the provincial governments to result in more children in school and better learning outcomes.