Part II - Huma Claims her Right to Education – Global Action Week for EFA 2011 Pakistan ..the citizens march for right to education action.

Huma the young drop out/push out from the local Govt. Girls Elementary school is waiting patiently to re-enroll in grade 4 during the Global Action Week for EFA 2011. She will certainly be the beneficiary of the province wide Chief Minister backed 100% enrolment campaign. Huma is also fortunate that her village has been selected for a pilot for 100% enrollment for pre-school and primary age group children 4-10 and improved learning levels as a result of a citizen led campaign for quality Education For All (EFA). The village Rawani about 21 kms from the historic city of Multan was one of the 30 villages of the district where the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2010 learning levels survey was conducted in October 2010. The survey touched 20 households of Rawani. Its results were as follows:

For age group 3-5 there were only 28 children enrolled and 102 un-enrolled. Out of the un-enrolled 49 % are girls. In 6-16 age group enrolled were 213, of which 57 % are girls. For the same age group the un-enrolled is 113 ( 35 %) of which 19% never enrolled and 16 % dropped out and the percentage of girls in un-enrolled is 57%

Rawani has a major crisis in learning levels when tested in Urdu, English and Arithmetic up to grade 2 and 3 levels. Of the 6-16 years of age, only 7% could do arithmetic (3 digit division); 14% could do Sentence level reading in English and 22% Urdu story level reading. For children in grade 5 this was 6%, 31% and 35% and for grade 4 these were 0%, 12% and 31%.

Armed with this data, the ASER team decided to engage in a deeper but more active dialogue with the residents of Rawani. This resulted in action by its citizens and volunteers. They were mobilized to begin a campaign. The campaign would focus on improving the learning levels and enrollment level of children as the diagnosis of the scale and reasons for both access and quality gaps had been identified.

It was at the village baithak (gathering) held at the girls elementary school in March 2011 where Huma’s problem was first raised by her brother. The community of 70 people at the post ASER gathering agreed that some of the problems in learning and attendance of students were because of their own careless attitude towards education and learning. However, they were also concerned about why the teachers came so late to the school at 10:30 am when the school time is 8:00 am? Although sufficient in number (11), the impact of teachers is not very visible.

They asked why girls were not enrolled and parents denied that right continuously? What are their rights as parents? They were concerned that there is constant discouragement by the school teachers for girls to persist education beyond grade 5 or at post primary level even though it is an elementary school up to grade 8? Why are their girls counseled to learn embroideries rather than be at school? In a school with 11 teachers the enrolment of 9 grades is only 140 with 40 in Pre school or Katchi and only 8 in grade 8? Why are no mothers or female family members on the school council? Why can’t the out of school children and mothers have access to second chance and literacy programs?
To do this decisively, it was decided that instead of a sample of households all homes would be targeted for the survey this time around. The inhabitants of the village agreed and also volunteered four educated young people who could help with the campaign. The survey revealed the following:

Out of school children - 215 (never enrolled = 164; and 52 Drop out) - 52 % Girls (much like the results of the Global Monitoring Report 2011. The in School children were 241 (45% Girls) and ever enrolled were 163 (404). The drop outs in Rawani of out of school were 52 of which 48% were girls. Of the drop outs below grade 2 were 11%; at and below grade 5 were 60% and drop out above grade 6 were 29%.

Once this data was collected and this time by the young citizens of Rawani themselves, it is the most effective graphic and real planning tool for Rawani’s households. Happily the ACTION HAS BEGUN !

The good news is Huma has been re-enrolled. Finally her family’s and her own wish is fulfilled.

Over 150 children in both girls and boys elementary schools are getting support for learning levels enhancement through a very precise method learnt from three amazing resource persons from Hyderabad (India) – the CAMAL way (Combined Activities for Maximized Learning). This is totally a learner centred confidence building simple but intensive technique forcing the teacher/s to be interactive. The method was learnt by many including the four volunteers. Now there are teachers in the government school willing to learn the CAMAL method so more children do not risk dropping out.

60 out of school children aged 5-12 years have begun their catch up classes in the afternoons with a view they may manage to enroll/re-enroll in September 2011 or March 2012. Another 40 will be targeted for the same age group in August 2011

The literacy and life skills class for 14-20 age group who never ever went to school will begin on September 8, 2011 (International Literacy Day). All this will be done as part of a campaign called Chalo Parho Barho (Let us read and grow). The pilot of CPB is currently underway in two villages for scaling up. Two young mothers had asked in the Rawani baithak if they could begin a good early years program as a community based enterprise near the school. With 102 un-enrolled in this age group the demand is huge and unmet. Fortunately there are many partners working to support and synergise the efforts of Rawani for both the un-enrolled and those at risk in schools. These partners include: the community, the government/schools department, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), Oxfam International and the Open Society Institute (OSI).

The challenge being debated this Global Action Week for EFA 2011 in Pakistan is that of implementation of Article 25- A, the Right to Education as a fundamental right for children aged 5-16. If ASER is scalable going from 32 to 70 districts in Pakistan; from 54,062 children to 110,000 children; from 19000 to 50,000 households, can Chalo Parho Barho also be scalable? If it can be scaled up to ensure that each village in Multan district suffering an education crisis can be mobilized, then only we can claim 25 –A, and the EFA and MDG targets for universal primary education, gender parity in primary and secondary education, and gender equity in Pakistan? Yes WE CAN; the citizens must rise, both the lettered and the unlettered to make many more Humas complete not just primary education, but up to age 16 at least!

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