

SEF Collective

March 2006



Village elders on stage at a *Kachehri*

With these past few months passing by like weeks, SEF has more than just a few stories and accounts to share. With activities ranging from introducing a new English-teaching program, training children to manage emergency situations, a conference on local governance in Lahore, story collection trips to rural communities in Balochistan and Sindh, and much else, this issue of the SEF Collective should make for more than just a short and snappy organizational review.

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Traditional Gatherings Reinforce Societal Values

A valuable tradition that still lives on proudly in Sindhi communities, especially those established in the rural districts of the province, is the common practice of conducting *kachehri*. For those who are unacquainted with the concept, *kachehri* is a gathering of village residents where they are free to discuss everything from their everyday tribulations to local and international newspaper headlines. This casual assembly of people is a custom that has sustained values such as community ownership, reverence for elders, voicing one's opinions, the notion to critically analyze issues and other points of discussion.

The Fellowship Schools Program (FSP) ended the previous year on a high note by conducting a series of such gatherings in its operational clusters in Karachi, Matyari and Khairpur. The first *kachehri* of the series was held at Goth Kambho Khan Baati, Matyari on December 16, 2005 with the assistance of the Parents Education Committee (PEC) of Sobho Khan Fellowship School. The next two *kachehri*s were conducted at Khairpur, one each in the urban and rural areas of the district. This time the PEC of the Angels Fellowship School took the initiative to organize the event. Towards the completion of these initial few *kachehri*s, the FSP team arrived at Darsano Channo to conduct a *kachehri* in Karachi. All the PECs of the locality and the Community Development Network (CDN) were actively involved in arrangements along with FSP team. The *kachehri*, featured a fascinating discussion on the poetry of Shah Latif Bhittai. Some people recited verses from the great thinker's poetry while others debated how Shah Latif's poetry was still applicable to society in these modern times. The discourse on societal values also reflected the significance of education, literacy and learning and the benefits they provide to the community. The elders present at the *kachehri*s stated that the importance of these opportunities can be assessed from the fact that a girl who has been through at least a primary level education is more likely to be aware of health issues and consequently raise a healthy family and willingly send her children to school.

All in all, organizing this gathering created enormous enthusiasm amongst all community members, all of whom declared that conducting such gatherings helped them understand the significance of maintaining cultural roots and traditional ways of life.

Children of the CDC Participate in Polio Walk

The Child Development Center (CDC) at Sher Shah is SEF's initiative undertaken by the Child Labor Education Program (CLEP) for the working and street children of Karachi's major manufacturing district – the S.I.T.E Industrial area. It is in the midst of large-scale factories and workshops, wholesale warehouses and retail trade that you will find a five-roomed building that offers a world of facilities to children who have never been in a school and have never enjoyed the pleasure of having hobbies and basic facilities such as clean washrooms, computers, a library and much more. These children are also given opportunities to participate in a number of activities and events.

The children of the CDC enthusiastically participated in a Polio Walk organized by the Rural Health Center in Sher Shah. The Nazim of Sher Shah inaugurated the activity by providing vaccination drops to the children. Furthermore, a vaccination camp was arranged at the CDC for one week where children of the locality visited with their parents to get their vaccination shots.

Workshop on Inclusive Learning

A workshop on 'Creating an Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environment (ILFE)' was organized by the Child Labor Education Program (CLEP). The 5-day workshop was held at the Child Development Center (CDC) from January 3 to 7, 2006. Its 'inclusive learning' component sought to train teachers to entrust parents with a more significant responsibility in the learning and development of their children; the segment on 'friendly environment' attempted to highlight the need for community participation in establishing an enabling learning environment for all children.

This innovatively executed workshop, which used an ILFE toolkit developed by UNESCO, also aimed at providing more activity-centered learning opportunities for children by educating the CDC teachers alternative instructional styles to meet each child's needs.

'Create Your Own Books', say the Children

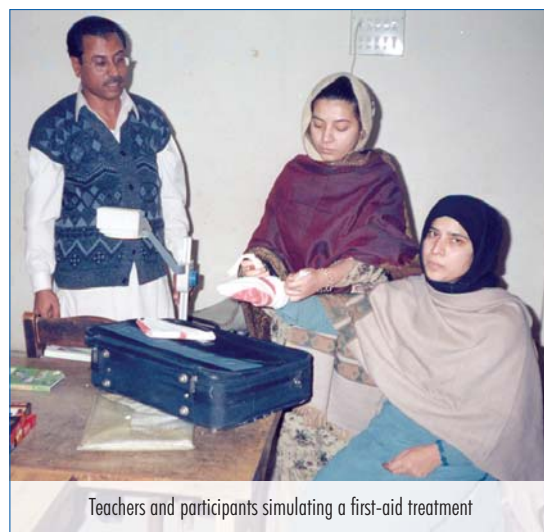


Young artists and writers busy making their books

It is an idea that smacks of pure genius. If children have had so much of a problem with school books and homework, why not work with them to create books according to their own interest. This interactive strategy was employed by the teachers and students of Grades III and VIII at the CDC. They worked together to create small booklets on various themes. One of the most imaginatively developed ones was 'Phool', a booklet that contained lots of interesting details and beautiful illustrations of different flowers.

Training Workshops on "Incorporating Health Education in Classrooms"

The need to include health education in classrooms is as dire as the need to inform students about the importance of math, physics or any other subject. For children who are constantly working and living in conditions that are absolutely devoid of any hygienic standards, it is more relevant and much more vital that they are informed of the importance of washing hands, of brushing their teeth, taking regular baths etc. However, before this education can be introduced in the classroom an important part of it all is also to train the teachers so that they can initiate health education in an interesting and interactive way for the children.



Teachers and participants simulating a first-aid treatment

A 5 day training on 'Incorporating Health Education in Classrooms' was conducted from December 5 to 9, 2005 at the CDC with the support of SEF's newly established Learning Support Unit (LSU). Musarat Zulfiqar, a Health Associate of the LSU, was the primary trainer in this program. During the training a 6 month action plan was formed to include the following issues in the classroom sessions:

- 1) Healthy behavior
- 2) Washing hands
- 3) Oral Hygiene
- 4) Using clean and potable water
- 5) Having a balanced diet
- 6) Discouraging the use of *gutka*, *paan*, *supari* and other addictive substances

To make them more interesting and interactive, the trainers also used manuals, models and puppets during the sessions.

SEF provides ACCESS to improve English Learning Centers



Students of the ACCESS program during one of the classes

The end of the year 2005 marked the commencement of the ACCESS program, the newest introduction to SEF's set of programs and projects. This two year program, initiated by the American Consulate, will be geared to provide English language learning opportunities to help underprivileged students from two low-cost private schools and 10 government schools.

The services will be provided through the establishment of two centers where an English Language Instructor will use integrated teaching-learning methodologies including the use of technology and access to print material to assist students in their academic and career progress.

Awareness of these centers will be generated in the localities where they have been established through the use of posters and distribution of application forms. Owing to the restricted space at the centers only 100 students will be short-listed. This screening will also include two selection tests to assess the students' level of English comprehension. The results will then not only help select candidates based on need and requirements but will also help improve the syllabus and structure of the lessons for these students.

At the end of the course, examinations will be held to objectively evaluate students' achievement. The ACCESS team will develop exam books, train proctors and establish affiliation requirements for interested students. The ACCESS team will also perform follow up visits to the schools during which the utilization of the course material in the classroom, classroom atmosphere and the practices of the students and teachers will be observed.

Early this year, the ACCESS team attended the South Asian Teachers Training Program (SATTP) workshop organized by the United States Education Foundation Pakistan (USEFP) on January 25 to 26, 2006 in Lahore. Other than providing the newly formed team a chance to meet with other ACCESS teams, the training also dealt with introducing new methodologies to teach English as a second language.

SEF assists Potential Social Researchers and Advocates

The Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) recently provided assistance to a group of enthusiastic young students with their research studies and investigations. These students were all members of Beyond Borders, an international youth program that challenges students from South Asia and UK to discover the world with their own perspectives and to identify social issues and difficulties faced within their communities.

The Adopt-A-School Program's team took the students to Mubarak Village and helped them communicate with the local community members to understand their customs and traditions. The exciting activity became a learning experience for the young minds helping them understand what it means to be an active global citizen, what social responsibility actually means, and how they would have to study the societal issues of Pakistan.

Training on Civil Defense for the CDC

In the wake of the recent earthquake in the Northern Areas of Pakistan that shook the earth, destroyed a number of villages and homes and took lives by the thousands, there was a heightened need to put in place precautionary measures that would alleviate the disastrous effects if any such calamity were to strike again.

A 6 day training session was held from December 19 to 24, 2005 at the Child Development Center with the support of the Civil Defense Department, Government of Sindh. The purpose of the training was to inform the teachers and the students of preventive measures that are vital during emergency situations such as earthquakes, fires etc. Mr. Khalid Shah, an Instructor of the Civil Defense Department, was the lead trainer. Along with his team, he discussed topics of first aid, fire fighting, rescue operations during emergencies and protection techniques during natural disasters. The teachers who underwent this training went on to educate their students and the parents of the community about preventive measures.

Visits to SEF

The Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) was recently visited by Mr. Richard Cartier, the Chief of Party, Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA).

He was shown around the office by Mr. Mashhood Rizvi of SEF. Mr. Cartier also discussed with Mr. Rizvi and Prof. Anita Ghulam Ali (S.I.) the possibilities of partnering together to work on ESRA's six technical areas, i.e. policy and planning, professional development, literacy, public-community partnerships, public-private partnerships, and information and communication technologies. During the informal meeting there was also an exchange of innovative and creative ideas on efficient school improvement and more access to early childhood care and education.

ESRA is an initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in support of the Government of Pakistan's Education Sector Reform (ESR).

Community Teachers Benefit from Trainings

The demand-driven nature of the Community Supported Schools Program (CSSP) ensures that its progress is greatly dependant on the needs of the community, their Village Education Committees, the teachers, the students and their parents. This dynamic attribute allows the program to undergo enterprising adaptation and enrichment. One such aspect of this enrichment is regular teacher training in order to share and acquaint them with teachers of new and more effective teaching practices and syllabi.

From December 26, 2005 to January 2, 2006 the CSS Program along with the Learning Support Unit (LSU), organized a training for its elementary school teachers. Nearly 100 elementary teachers from Sehwan, Warah, Mehar & Larkana clusters participated in this 8 day training. The content of this widely appreciated training focused on the concepts of teachers' beliefs, child psychology, more effective multi-grade teaching, health education and subject-based sessions on Mathematics and English.

Support Extended to Community Schools

One of SEF's salient strategies to improve and support the quality of teaching and education is to provide teaching and learning aids according to each program's requirements. On regular visits to the Community Supported Schools (CSS) its program team observed that there was a significant need for material that would allow for more child-centered environment. As a result, during the month of October 2005, the CSSP team was involved in distributing learning material within its schools.

The team has also put immense efforts into compiling innovative manuals that will aid teachers in introducing newer concepts in the classroom with helpful activities and lectures. During the past quarter manuals on earthquakes, multi-grade teaching, algebra and graphs were distributed amongst the teachers.

Expanding Literacy and Empowerment through Volunteers

The Women's Literacy and Empowerment Program (WLEP) has one of its renowned centers in Khalifa Jat, a community in Rehri Goth. Through regular monitoring and observation it was noticed that enrolments were decreasing over the months. The monitoring team also noticed a sharp decline in the attendance of the learners. On further investigation the WLEP team learnt that the decreasing enrolment rate and attendance was mainly due to the various household chores the women had to complete in their respective households. This was a predicament that needed to be solved by inventive and original thinking. The team could not ask the learners to prioritize between their household chores and learning at the center as both were equally important.

Therefore, the WLEP team chose a volunteer amongst the learners who could teach the absentees in their respective homes. The program team trained this volunteer to improve her training skills. Not only did this enterprising idea provide absentees a convenient alternative to attain much-needed literacy skills, but it also provided an opportunity to the learners to become the facilitators.

The success of this idea was taken forward in the same community where 3 volunteers are facilitating 17 learners at home. Furthermore, the same initiative is being applied in Chashma, another village which benefits from the initiatives of WLEP. In Chashma two volunteers are currently training seven learners.

Raising Awareness in the Communities

Parents may not always be aware of the massive amount of learning that takes place when a child is growing, especially from age 0 to 8 years of age. This is when the stage is set inside the child's brain to build up on the ability to be curious, creative and emotionally stable, to cope with stress in the future and to build a strong immune system among many other abilities that are vital in the life ahead. On these lines an awareness-raising session on the "Early Years of a Child" was held by the WLEP team in the village of Mohammad Bux Brehmani. It sought to inform parents, especially the mothers, of the phenomenal learning that takes place in a child's brain even during simple activities such as interacting with the people around them, playing with things present in their environment and many more.



Prof. Rehana Mughni (far right) speaking during one of the sessions

Informing the communities was taken further with respect to educating them about fatal diseases, especially diabetes. The need was felt more after Asima, a learner from Khalifa Jat, had recently passed away due to diabetes. More than 30 community women including learners and Learning Facilitators attended this session on diabetes. The session aimed at informing the learners about details of the disease and also sought to find out how prevalent it was within their communities. The WLEP team also conducted an independent study from which it was learnt that none of the learners had ever been medically tested for diabetes. The session also briefed all participants on the medically-proven precautionary practices that were necessary to prevent or curb the ill-effects of diabetes.

District Level Events Organized to Promote Girls Education



Participants during one of UNICEF's district level events

Making education inexpensive and accessible is the keystone of any national plan to eliminate gender disparity in education and achieve universal education. Faced with an economically driven choice between sending sons or daughters to school, poor families often send their sons. What parents fail to realize is that education for their daughters can be a source of learning life-skills and an opportunity to enjoy a life that is both socially and economically beneficial. Numerous studies show that a girl who has been through at least a primary level education is more likely to be more aware of her health

and will consequently raise a healthy family and readily invest in her own children's education, thus guaranteeing intergenerational education.

Aiming towards achieving the universal Millennium Development Goals (MDG) the Government of Sindh and UNICEF have collaborated in the second phase of the Acceleration of Girls' Education (AGE) Project. The underlining objectives of this project are:

- 1) To enroll approximately 68,700 additional girls into schools of 5 districts of Sindh – Khairpur, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar, Thatta and Umerkot - by the end of December 2005
- 2) To ensure that at least 95% of girls enrolled in 2004 (approximately 50, 000) are retained into the next grade
- 3) To ensure that 80% primary-school-age children, especially girls, complete primary schooling in the 5 aforementioned districts of Sindh by the end of December 2008

As part of this project, UNICEF also felt the need to organize meetings at the district level to provide a forum for the respective governments for partner NGOs and all other stakeholders. These meetings would serve to develop a mutual understanding between all participants on the issue of providing more and better educational facilities for girls between the ages of 5 and 9 years.

The Sindh Education Foundation, a technical partner of the project, initiated the meetings with a series of visits to the Executive District Officers (EDO's) of each of the 5 focused districts. These visits attempted to acquaint the EDO's and other government officials about the objectives and achievements of the AGE project and the need to group together to discuss and debate problems and their solutions. These orientation visits set the path for the final meetings all of which were held at the end of December 2005. The agenda of these meetings included a situational analysis by SEF on the state of girls' education in Sindh followed by presentation by the partnering NGO of the respective district. What proved significantly helpful to the cause was the attention and interest shown towards the project by the government officials. During all meetings the efforts of UNICEF to regenerate educational facilities for girls were immensely appreciated. Not only did the meetings provide a much needed opportunity for organizations and individuals to voice their problems and their proposals but they also brought them together to coordinate their efforts to provide a brighter and more conducive learning environment for girls.

MoU Signed with the Community Development Network

Previously, SEF administered all Community Supported Schools through their 72 partner Village Education Committees (VECs). These VECs held the primary responsibility of managing the schools. With a recent change in strategy these VECs have joined hands and have established the cluster-wise Community Development Networks (CDN). This network will serve as an umbrella organization over the VECs and will efficiently coordinate and communicate the activities and initiatives taken by the VECs. A memorandum of understanding was signed between CDN Larkana, Sehwan & Malir and SEF in November, 2005. It is also expected that this network will strengthen the grassroots participation in the social and educational development of rural communities.

SEF Trains HSP Teachers & Supervisors



Ms. Shaista of the HSP team at the training

To date the Home Schools Program (HSP) has established 100 Home Schools. These schools are providing low-cost and quality educational opportunities to more than 4000 students. A tremendous achievement of these schools is that 80% of girls from 23 talukas of 12 districts of Sindh now attend school on a regular basis.

These schools employ the services of 165 teachers and it is the primary responsibility of the Sindh Education Foundation and the partnering NGO to work together to provide support and training services to these teachers to improve the learning environment in the classroom. Bearing these vital objectives in mind the HSP team recently organized an extensive activity-based training. The training also helped HSP teachers understand various subjects and improve their teaching techniques. This teachers training, initiated in February, was accomplished in 3 clusters of the program, Karachi, Larkana and Hyderabad.

This productive 5 day training, one that was immensely appreciated by all school supervisors and teachers, covered various topics such as:

- 1) Belief system
- 2) Professional development
- 3) Child psychology: learning and behavioral patterns
- 4) Activity-based learning
- 5) Multi-grade teaching
- 6) Learning material orientation

The enthusiasm that welcomed the training team during the activity helps the organization realize the value of enhancing the capacities of people who are working at grassroots levels, because eventually it is these people who directly make all the difference SEF strives for.

Health Screening for Women Learners



A doctor at the Malkai Para camp speaks to one of her patients

In the month of January 2006 the Women's Literacy & Empowerment Program (WLEP) launched a major health screening activity launched for its learners and the members of the community.

Two camps were set up, one at Malkai Para and the other at Kuhi to expand interventions in health and nutrition, education, and the control of communicable diseases. Through this activity the WLEP team also aimed to strengthen the capacity of institutional and human resources of the Ministry of Health and of the provincial health departments to sustain women's health care on a long term basis.

The camp at Malkai Para camp served all Women's Learning & Empowerment Center (WLEC) learners coming from fishing communities of Rehri Goth. Two doctors, Dr. Paras and Dr. Afshan had thorough check-ups of all women learners under the supervision of Dr. Asima from the Sindh Education Foundation.

More than 180 learners received comprehensive check-ups, medicines and blood tests. Many were also referred to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical College (JPMC) for further treatment.

The camp at Kuhi set up at the Women's Hospital of the Aliya Zafar Foundation, served learners from communities belonging to the agricultural areas of Malir. This camp served 120 learners from 4 centers in addition to the basic facilities that were provided at the Malkai Para camp, patients were also referred to the JPMC for cases of goiter and primary infertility.

Home Schools Program Team Monitors Schools

During the previous quarter an in-depth monitoring activity was conducted in the schools of the Home Schools Program and their respective communities. The basic idea was to gauge the performance of the partner NGOs and supervisors, as well as the perceptions of the community members, parents and students. The results obtained from this activity would consequently help in reviewing the policies and fine-tuning the intervention strategy of the program.

The study also attempted to assess information related to the students' enrolment, attendance, their use of resource material in the classroom, teachers' qualifications, attendance and training needs etc. Through individual sessions with teachers, during which the team discussed topics such as multiple intelligences and multi-sensory approaches, the team sought insights into the need to create a more nurturing, culturally relevant and creative learning environment in the classrooms through the use of learning materials and other teaching aids.

Amongst the wealth of insights that were gained through the initiative, it was observed that the HSP schools are wholeheartedly living up to their vision of inculcating within the communities the sentiments of educating children with self-reliance and self-esteem.

The monitoring also revealed that schools have benefited greatly now that teachers have been trained to practice more activity-based learning and multi-grade teaching methods. It was also learnt that in the schools of Shahdadpur and Faridabad clusters, community members have galvanized themselves and have nominated members who are voluntarily teaching in these schools without any financial compensation. Yet more inspiring is the account of a girl, in the Thul district, who is voluntarily running a school since 1999. Here the landlord (Wadera/Zamidar) of this area supports the teacher by granting her Rs.200/- per student per year for those students who pass the annual exam from a nearby Government school.

Despite the success stories, there is still a need of facilities such as additional learning material and teaching aids, especially in Sindhi; services such as teacher's training, appointment of school supervisors and teachers, and financial support. To find out how you can contribute to this initiative please contact a representative of the Home Schools Program at the Sindh Education Foundation.

New Center Established and Infrastructural Support Provided

The new year started with the inauguration of a new Women's Learning and Empowerment Center in Malir – Allah Dino-I. The rationale for its establishment was the eager interest shown by community members towards literacy and better learning opportunities. Bearing this interest in mind the Women's Literacy & Empowerment Program (WLEP) team members, worked hard to swiftly set up a center that would cater to the educational needs and requirements of the community.

Similarly in Sehwan, two new centers Mitho Khan and Ali Khanana have also been established with the support of the community members and the facilitation of the WLEP team. Currently both centers cater to 66 learners with more than 85% attendance.

Establishing these centers has helped the WLEP team to thoroughly understand the importance of community involvement and participation. The usual effort required by SEF for such endeavors is greatly minimized when it involves the participation of the learners and other community members, a learning that will always keep SEF's initiatives low-cost, effective and beneficial.

SEF Initiates Local Story Collection Activity

Surely the most efficient way of keeping traditions alive, of keeping a locality's history intact and of preserving the identity of a community of people alive is the collection of stories and tales that originate within the region. Traditional stories and folk tales not only distinguish a community's identity from that of others, they also allow the community to be recognized as part of the human race.

After more than 2 years of constructive intervention in *katchi* classrooms the Releasing Confidence & Creativity (RCC)¹ Programme and its members now fully advocate the need for more local and culturally relevant material to be taught in the classrooms. Along with this material, and as part of RCC's objectives for its second phase, there has been immense emphasis placed upon collecting local and traditional stories from various villages and cities of Sindh and Balochistan, especially the ones where RCC is now a household name linked to child-centered education for young children. This emphasis recently materialized into a field plan which includes visits by RCC team members to schools and communities to gather stories containing values and morals necessary for growing children.

SEF's team flew to Quetta on August 22, 2005 where they traveled to a number of villages with RCC schools. The team also visited a number of villages in Sindh during the first week of September, especially in the districts of Hala and Tando Saindad where a number of local stories were collected. The team met up with school teachers, headmasters and headmistresses to assess the kind of books that would fascinate the children in a way that would enhance their ability to read and write. During visits to the communities even the community elders had a range of stories that they eagerly shared with the team.

The team has so far collected an assortment of folk tales as well as other stories and narrations. These include modern versions of legendary myths, self-developed anecdotes and poetry. Before rushing into the process of compiling a collection for classrooms, a screening process will be undertaken to select stories that will be appropriate and helpful for children.

SEF is still looking for stories that are captivating, fascinating and relevant for young children. With a little effort you might recollect the stories and fairy-tales your parents and grandparents narrated to you when you were a child. If you would like to share these stories for them to be featured in the local stories series for pre-primary children, please send in your contributions through post or via email at info@ecd-pak.com.

Monitoring Data Presented on Private Schools in Sindh

With the conclusion of one of SEF key initiatives to provide institutional support to the private sector, the Monitoring and Evaluation team at SEF presented their research findings and results of their data collection activity for private schools in Sindh. For this purpose SEF gathered data from 300 private schools that partnered with SEF under the Support to Private Education Institutes Program (SPEIP). The salient objectives of this study were to make a comparison between the results of SPEIP baseline and monitoring surveys; also to assess the impact of SPEIP interventions. With this purpose in mind the data gathered by the M&E team disclosed a number of details. Statistics representing the enrolment of attendance of boys and girls, and signing up of teachers both male and female have shown healthy trends. One essential development that was revealed has been the substantial increase in SMC formation with the initiation of SPEIP. The data also shows that under this program, the partner low-cost private schools have made good use of the support that SEF has provided, i.e. provision of learning material and computers, making available training and capacity development opportunities and more. To learn more about this study contact SEF and the findings will be shared with you.

¹The RCC Programme is based on the concepts of Early Childhood Development, where absolute attention is paid to creating a more child-centered environment in the classroom. It is currently being applied to 155 schools in the rural districts of Balochistan and Sindh. The RCC Programme is being sponsored by USAID and is being supported by the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan. Several agencies provide technical assistance to the project, one of which is the Sindh Education Foundation.

Innovatory Learning Support Unit Formed



Ms. Sana (left) and Ms. Laila, members of the LSU, Academic team during one of their trainings

To undertake capacity building initiatives which enrich and enhance the learning environment in all SEF schools, a unit titled the Learning Support Unit (LSU) has been established. LSU aims to "create spaces to learn, unlearn and relearn the concepts & beliefs about learning, schooling, teaching, and education".

Through its innovative trainings the LSU also stresses the promotion of education and learning as harmonious, mutual and participatory processes rather than isolated, school based and curriculum driven interventions. For the year 2005-06 the unit's primary focus will be rooted in nurturing children's learning capabilities and providing an environment for innate potential to flourish.

As part of the quality education and school development mandate of SEF's core vision, the need to develop teachers as "critical thinkers" is the major thrust behind all teacher development initiatives undertaken by LSU. Therefore, all teacher training activities are based on the critical notion of challenging existing belief systems about education, schooling, learning and parental involvement and helping teachers rethink and reorganize their teaching practices, methodologies and approaches with a renewed vision.

The trainings also underpin the need to constantly advance the learning environment by introducing more creative and alternative teaching methodologies and putting into practice techniques emerging from indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values.

Second Issue of Parwarish out On Stands



After the success of its first issue, subscribers and other readers are in for another knowledge-packed issue of Parwarish, the Releasing Confidence & Creativity (RCC) Programme's flagship Urdu publication on Early Childhood Development (ECD). The publication has drawn tremendous interest in the rural districts of Sindh and Balochistan, more so in the villages where RCC schools have been set up and where parents are well aware of providing their children with an environment that is sensitive to their emotional, physical and mental needs.

The upcoming issue of Parwarish intends to live up to the success of its previous issue, this time by focusing on the subject of parenting and care giving. It has attractive articles and handouts on "multiple intelligences" that children improve during their early years and go on to use later in life.

The issue also carries features that bring to attention how to prevent injuries to the child at home. One absorbing and extremely informative read is an article on the effects that TV has on the mental growth of children, how it stunts the natural development of curiosity and creativity and how it impedes the child's imagination. On the whole this is one issue that should not be missed by parents and teachers.

If you are interested in getting your own free copy of Parwarish call now at (021) 111-424-111 (216) or write to us at info@ecd-pak.com and order your free copy. Kindly include your postal address and other contact details.

An International Conference on Local Governance Text & Contexts: Perspectives from South Asia

At the beginning of February, 2006 SEF participated in a conference that brought together social scientists, historians, academicians and experienced theorists from all over South Asia to showcase the common cross-regional radical solutions for effective local governance and integrated knowledge formations. The conference titled 'Local Governance, Texts and Contexts: Perspectives from South Asia' was held in Lahore from February 1-2, 2006. The conference aimed at bringing the finest of thinkers, activists and crafts persons engaged in decentralization and curriculum making. The conference served as an excellent platform to rethink education and local governance for a post-colonial liberation movement.



Mr. Mashhood Rizvi (far left) during a press meeting at the conference

Speakers in the conference included renowned development sector officials including Mr. Syed Babar Ali, Pro-Chancellor, LUMS University, Ms. Tehseen Syed, World Bank, Mr. Anil Sethi, NCERT, India, Ms. Shahnaz Adams, Secretary Education, Maldives, Ms. Kamud Bansal, Secretary Education and Literacy, India, Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, BRAC, Bangladesh, Dr. Arefa Syeda Zehra, Chairperson, NCSW, Mr. Mashhood Rizvi, Sindh Education Foundation, Dr. Fareeha Zafar, SAHE, Ms. Anne Keeling and Ms. Jyotsna Jha from the Commonwealth Secretariat, UK and others. The vision of the conference will be extended to form a forum titled the 'South Asia Forum for Education Development (SAFED)' which will be set up as a network of active thinkers, policy makers, practitioners, researchers and financiers.

The conference was organized by the Alliance for Education Development (AfED)² in partnership with Commonwealth Education Fund, Commonwealth Secretariat, Unilever, GTZ and UNESCO. SEF played a significant role as an essential technical partner of the conference and provided extensive support in the management and execution of activities.

Upcoming Conference on ECD

Childhood is a period of constructing meaning for "Self" and nurturing the innate potential. Childhood also presents a kaleidoscope of possibilities that emerge as a result of the interplay of many social, cultural, biological, linguistic and spiritual factors. The schooling system and generally the whole world with its ever-changing values and culture have ignored children's natural desire to be imaginative, curious and artistic but have instead developed and perpetuated systems which have proved hazardous to their cognitive, emotional and physical health.

Challenging these systems, the Sindh Education Foundation, with the support and collaboration of the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan and USAID, will be organizing a pioneering 4-day event from April 3-6, 2006 at the Marriott Hotel, Karachi.

Of these four days, a 3-day symposium, titled "Rediscovering Childhood", will challenge the assumption that children's success, be it in school or anywhere else, is a goal unto itself, rather than a by-product of children who are happy, well-loved, and allowed to develop at their own pace. The symposium will seek to evoke a powerful reminder to all of us of what childhood is ideally meant to be in the first place. Finally a day-long conference on Early Childhood Development will aim at engaging the decision and policy makers in a dialogue to review challenges and opportunities for Early Childhood Development in Pakistan.

To be a part of this event register yourself now. Call us at (021) 111-424-111 (ext: 216) and provide your details.

²The Alliance for Education Development (AfED) is a network of seven organizations across three provinces with a shared philosophy to promote the case of education development in Pakistan. The organizations included in the alliance are Alif Laila Book Bus Society, Democratic Commission for Human Development, Female Education Trust, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, National Education Foundation, Sindh Education Foundation and Sudhar.