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Safe Schools Initiative: Protecting the Right to Learn in Pakistan

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Over the past four decades, Pakistan has experienced more attacks on education than any country in the world.¹ Militants have destroyed thousands of school buildings, have taken the lives of hundreds of teachers and students and have denied the right to education to thousands more. In the past five years, more than 1,000 schools were destroyed in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which includes Peshawar.² Between 2011 and 2012 there were 105 attacks on schools countrywide.³ In the wake of the tragic massacre that took the lives of over 130 innocent children and more than 10 teachers in Peshawar, Pakistan, which has been followed by additional attacks on education, an immediate scaled-up response is needed to protect schools, students and school personnel from attacks.

Several Pakistani provincial governments, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan, have already begun to direct educational institutions in districts across the country to take additional security measures. For example, the Punjab government has released a set of requirements for schools, including installing closed-circuit cameras, raising the boundary walls of schools to at least eight feet and topping the walls with razor wire (See Appendix I),⁴ before they reopen following the 2015 winter break.⁵ The new Punjab security guidelines, focused primarily on physical infrastructure and security, are to be implemented in three phases, with the first phase having concluded in January of 2015.⁶ Five security agencies, comprising a newly created special force, will collectively inspect the schools to gauge their compliance.⁷

As the Pakistani government works to ensure schools are safe for all children, this paper outlines 15 best practices building on global expertise and experience. The best practices highlight proven measures to make schools safe and should be considered as Pakistan continues to develop comprehensive safe schools programming for all girls and boys. They are intended to complement and support current government activities and serve as a basis for a framework to build school and community based interventions to promote Safe Schools in Pakistan with support from the international community.



Global Best Practices for Safe Schools

The 15 best practices span three broad intersecting areas: 1) community-based interventions, 2) school-based interventions and, 3) interventions for the most at-risk.

Part I: Community-based Interventions:

Utilizing local knowledge and relationships, communities play critical roles advocating, monitoring and negotiating for the protection of schools as well as providing for their physical protection. Community based interventions provide cost-effective measures essential for prevention and protection of schools and students.

Examples of community-based programs for adaptation to the Pakistani context include:⁸

Community education committees. As communities have specialized knowledge about their particular context and conflict dynamics, they may be the best suited to devise practical solutions for protecting education from attack and for helping negotiate schools as peaceful zones. Community education committees help to cultivate community buy-in by training a diversity of community members in school administration and inviting them to take stake in the decision making process.

- In Somalia, UNICEF has trained volunteers to serve as intermediaries between the community and the school management as part of building community education committees. These committees helped reduce the influence of al-Shabaab in the schools, particularly when respected elders and religious leaders participate in the school's decision-making processes.⁸ They have been successful in several regions in curtailing attack.⁸
- In Pakistan, School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) are common institutions that incorporate a diversity of community participants. SMCs and PTCs are given a certain degree of decision-making authority and have been successfully utilized in previous emergency situations, helping to facilitate the continuation of education after the 2005 earthquake for example.⁹



2

Community watches. Organized community watches and teacher-student-parent defense units can be effective mechanisms to open lines of communication and prevent or immediately report any suspicious activity. This type of community watch system may help to stop attacks on education infrastructure under the cover of darkness or attacks on school-bound transit.

- In Zimbabwe, parents and teachers formed a unified front, freely sharing information that helped remove militia camps from schools.¹⁰
- In Pakistan, as announced by KPK Provincial Minister for Information Mushtaq Ghani, a community watch will be set up, utilizing the services of retired security personnel to help watch over at-risk schools.

3

Religious leader engagement. Engagement of religious leaders in the promotion of education has a significant impact in reducing attacks. In Peshawar, prominent Muslims have delivered speeches about the importance of education and of sending students back to school in a program supported by UNICEF. Increased engagement of religious leaders around the importance of protecting education has proven invaluable.

- In Afghanistan, in collaboration with community shuras and protection committees, respected imams or religious mullahs sometimes use their Friday speeches to raise awareness about the importance of education in Islam.¹¹
- In Somalia, religious leaders have gone on public radio in government-controlled areas and visited schools to advocate against the recruitment of children.¹¹

4

Community-driven negotiations. In some communities, collaboration among diverse political and ethnic groups in widely publicized mass meetings can lead to the development of safe school zones based upon an agreed code of conduct between parties.

- In Nepal and the Philippines, the writing and signing of codes of conduct defined what was and was not allowed on school grounds in order to minimize violence, school closures and the politicization of schooling. For instance, terms of the code in some cases included “no arrest or abduction of any individual within the premises” and “no use of schools as armed bases.” In general the signatory parties kept their commitments and these efforts helped communities to keep schools open, improving protection as well as school governance.¹⁰



Part II: School-based Interventions

At the individual school level, based on global standards to protect schools, it is recommended that schools implement the following Safe School interventions as relevant:

5

School safety plan. Each school should have a safety plan so students and personnel know what to do in the case of an emergency and roles are clearly defined. In line with guidance provided by local authorities, all staff and students should be familiarized with the plans and corresponding procedures. School security plans should be communicated to families and the broader community.

6

Training staff as school safety officers. School personnel should be trained on security measures including procedures for the evacuation of school buildings and communication with security officials. Selected safety officers in schools must also ensure each classroom has an emergency pack containing supplies that must accompany each class when an evacuation occurs. All safety officers should be able to communicate with local authorities should a school come under attack.

7

School counselor visits. Counselors can be based in each school or appointed to carry out regular school visits in several communities. They can greatly assist students who have experienced attacks by addressing trauma so that they are able to refocus on learning. Counselors may also help students cope with the perceived militarization of their schools that can occur should armed protection be present.¹³ Trained health professionals have been assisting those students affected by the tragedy in Peshawar in accordance with a plan developed by the Pakistani National Health Service.¹⁴

8

Education contingency plans. If a school is attacked, a rapid response unit should help to ensure that they are quickly repaired or rebuilt, and destroyed education material is replaced. A senior official could be designated in each district to oversee the rapid response system and ensure that education is made available at alternative locations until schools are rebuilt and secure conditions are ensured.



9

Reinforced school infrastructure. Bolstering of the physical protection of schools is necessary to shield staff and students and provide a first line self-defense. The construction of boundary walls to prevent attack and abduction is commonplace in Pakistan, though adequate height and quality of construction need to be taken into account. Current evidence on the existence of complete boundary walls in schools reveals that only 61% of surveyed government schools and 27% of private primary schools in rural areas have boundary walls.¹⁶ Recommended security measures should be extended to any teacher and/or student housing that may be associated with the school.

New security guidelines put forth by the Punjab Government include:¹⁷

- Construction of a boundary wall to eight feet in height.
- Fencing of a boundary wall with two feet of razor wire.
- Use of a single entry/exit gate for general operations.
- Erection of concrete barriers directing traffic in a zigzag formation at entry/exit gate.
- Use of metal detectors and mirrors for the physical search of entrants and vehicles.
- Establishment of check-in system to record the credentials of entrants.
- Development of a security contingency and rescue plan including the security of transportation to the educational institutions.

10

Additional security personnel. If appropriate, schools should coordinate with government security personnel and protocol already operating to protect schools. Additional personnel can serve as a deterrent to would-be attackers or repel potential attacks. The use of security personnel, both public and private, to repel and intimidate would-be attackers is common practice in many areas of Pakistan and has been a successful deterrent to attack in other conflict areas globally.¹⁸ However, it should be noted that visibly armed protection at schools has been shown to negatively impact learning.²⁹ The regulations put forth by the Punjab Government regarding the required deployment of security guards include:¹⁹

- Deployment of dedicated guards to operate checkpoints and physically search vehicles and pedestrians. One guard to be deputed for the performance of only one duty.
- Deployment of trained armed guards at vantage points, including the rooftops.
- Verify the credentials of guards by the Special Branch of Police. Guards must be hired under all requirements of the law and in accordance with the Punjab Private Security Companies (Regulation and Control) Rules 2003.

11

Security guidelines for private schools. Private schools, which account for 70% of enrollment in urban areas, are largely responsible for their own security and should be provided with security guidance to ensure the safety of their staff and students.²⁰ The Punjab Government states that 'Private school administrations be specifically instructed to enhance security measures in and around their schools. If a particular school fails to arrange/adopt security measures to satisfactory level of local police and district administration, the same will not be allowed to operate.' Regular inspections could be carried out to ensure these guidelines are obeyed. Government officials in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province have already conducted meetings with private school officials to develop agreed-upon guidelines.²¹



All schools must be provided with adequate finances from respective provincial governments to enforce these measures. The Punjab Government notes that 'The District Administration and police authorities should provide necessary technical assistance. Technical assistance will also be provided by the representative of Special Branch and the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) where available.' The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Government has directed schools to use Parent Teacher Council Funds (PTC) to implement the new security measures, though many schools do not have adequate or any PTC funds.²²

Part III: Interventions for the Most At-Risk

In some of the most at-risk locations, a Safe Schools Initiative could include special provisions with the government to improve overall security and ensure special provisions are in place, including:

Zone schools. Consolidating schools ensures targeted and efficient use of available resources to maximize protection and prevent attacks. Zoning measures can include:

- Zone by local districts: Consolidated schools could be made available in each district. Primary schools with low enrollment could be consolidated. This facilitates access to schools for teachers and students.
- Explore the use of shifts: With consolidation, there will be a dramatic increase in the number of students and teachers using select school infrastructure. Utilizing a shift-based system of schooling, which involves teaching a group of children in the morning and another in the afternoon, can minimize a strain on resources.
- Position consolidated schools in safer areas: Consolidated schools should be located in low-risk areas, preferably away from ground cover that can compromise security efforts.

Rapid Response and real-time emergency communication systems. Emergency communication systems should be put in place to allow schools and authorities to communicate with each other in the event of an emergency.

- In Palestine, UNESCO helped to establish an emergency alert system in which parents and students could be warned via text message in the morning if routes to school were not deemed to be safe.²³
- In Colombia, the government has issued teachers radios and mobile phones to enable teachers to communicate to authorities in an emergency situation.¹²
- In December 2014, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government launched an emergency mobile application so schools can more easily alert a rapid response force.¹⁵



14

Safe transportation protocol. School buses and transportation routes have increasingly become targets of attack and the Pakistani Government has warned of impending attacks on school transportation in the wake of the Peshawar tragedy.²⁴ As noted in the Peshawar security measures (See Appendix I), drivers should check the identification of each student passenger and school buses should be parked and stored in secure places. Buses should be swept daily for explosive devices.²⁵

15

Alternative solutions for schools in high-risk areas. In areas that are especially high-risk where schools are more likely to be under attack, it is important to employ alternative methods of education delivery that minimize the possibility of schools being targeted. Methods may include temporary or mobile schools, community-based schools or distance learning provided by business, non-governmental organizations or United Nations agencies. Online learning programs such as Pakistan's 'click2learn' can be used to ensure that learning is ongoing even if schools are closed.²⁶

Conclusion: Towards a National Safe Schools Initiative with International Support

In the wake of the December 2014 attack in Peshawar, the Pakistani provinces of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Sindh responded rapidly with a set of security measures to prevent future attacks on schools, as did other government authorities. These measures address many critical aspects of school infrastructure and defense in the most high-risk areas.

The 15 best practices in this report support the existing measures already underway and propose a basis for a framework for a comprehensive approach to protect schools by involving communities, empowering school staff and protecting children physically and psychologically from the threat of attack.

To support the Pakistani government's protection of schools, the implementation of a comprehensive school and community-based approach to Safe Schools must encourage:

- 1) Adopting national guidelines for Safe Schools that work to incorporate provincial approaches as part of a nationwide effort to build on best global practices with the ability to adapt interventions to the local context.**
- 2) Committing domestic and international resources to take a Safe Schools Initiative to scale across the country. The financing of the Safe Schools Initiative should focus on:**
 - **Prioritizing at-risk schools:** As of early January, only 118 of 1,440 schools in Peshawar have been able to implement the new security measures and reopen.²⁷ Additional financing is needed for scale-up, particularly for those schools and communities most at risk. Funds for Safe Schools must be part of the mainstream annual budgets.



- **Making new resources available:** Resources for school protection should be new funds not pulled from existing or planned, education, health and social service resource provisions. In the short-term, resources previously allocated to school management committees for maintenance and repair needs, learning materials, furniture, hiring teachers and other ongoing costs have been repurposed for security and infrastructure. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, US \$15 million earmarked for school sanitary facilities and drinking water will be repurposed to assist in implementing new security measures at schools.²⁸ These funds should be replenished so that health and learning outcomes do not suffer and students and teachers are not made vulnerable in other ways.
- **Encouraging international donor and private sector support:** In Nigeria, business leaders collaborated with donors, UN agencies, business and government to launch a similar Safe Schools Initiative with an innovative financing model combining resources from the private sector, government, and international donor agencies. As this initiative begins to scale, lessons in responding with urgency and financing across stakeholders can be applied to the Pakistani context. The members of the Pakistan Working Group of the Global Business Coalition for Education as well as donors engaging in the local education group can support key ways to contribute to the national effort to create Safe Schools in collaboration with UN agencies and operational NGOs.

Through these efforts, a comprehensive and well-financed Safe Schools Initiative will ensure that education is safe and provide a bold step forward in the achievement of universal education in Pakistan.

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Appendix I: Government of the Punjab Security Guidelines for Safe Schools

Government of the Punjab, Home Department, NO.SO (IS-II)3-3/09/2014

Lahore, the 16th December 2014

Please refer to the terrorist attack on a school at Peshawar leaving more than 130 students and teachers dead and many injured on 16.12.2014. Similar terrorist attack on Government as well as private Schools/Colleges/Universities in Punjab cannot be ruled out.

The situation calls for an immediate and all out efforts to ward off such terrorists attacks. Strict and extensive security measures must be put in place to avoid any unwanted incident in future security measures at all Government, Private, Missionary, Armed Forces and Multinational Co-Education educational institutions be reviewed forthwith keeping in view the circumstances leading to the Peshawar incident as well as the methodology adopted by the miscreants for the said terrorist activity. Necessary preventive measure be adopted plugging in all the loop holes/security gaps.

I. In addition to already circulated security instructions and as deemed appropriate following instructions are also issued for strict compliance.

- a. Construction of boundary wall up to 8x feet.
- b. Fencing the boundary wall with razor wire up to another 2x feet.
- c. Using single entry/exit gate generally and using of second gate only in exceptional circumstances/emergency exit.
- d. Erection of concrete barriers at entry/exit gate.
- e. Installation of walk through gate and use of metal detectors for physical search of the entrants and use of bottom view mirrors for checking of vehicles.
- f. Ensuring zig zag entry into premises through deployment of concrete barriers.
- g. Establishment of proper check-in system for recording credentials of entrants.
- h. Deployment of dedicated guards for operation of barrier, physical search of the vehicles and for physical search of the pedestrians. One guard to be deputed for performance of only one duty. The guards to perform their duties in duly notified shifts.
- i. Deployment of trained armed guards at vantage points including rooftop.
- j. Installation of CCTV Cameras system and provision of generators/UPS for ensuring uninterrupted power supply for inside and outside coverage.
- k. Deployment of dedicated security officer to be over all in charge of security of the establishment
- l. Deployment of guards after verification of credentials by Special Branch of Police.
- m. Searchlights and razor cut wires be also erected at all the schools.
- n. All buses plying for Schools/Colleges/Universities be parked at safe and secure places. Conductor of the bus must check the identity of each student before allowing him to board the bus.



- o. Preparation of Security Contingency and Rescue Plan invariably including security of buses of the Educational Institutions.
- p. SOPs for ensuring preparation against acts of terrorism and response thereto with clearly notified duties of all staff and management.
- q. Schools within the jurisdiction of a particular Police Station must depute a mobile team to inspect the security aspects on daily basis.
- r. It shall be the responsibility of the Educational Institution to ensure all guards be deployed are either hired from licensed Private Security Companies registered under the Punjab Private Security Companies (Regulation and Control) Act 2004 or fulfill the criterion laid down in the Punjab Private Security Companies (Regulation and Control) Rules 2003 in case of hiring of guards by the Educational Institutions themselves.
- s. It shall be the responsibility of the Educational Institutions to ensure that the Private Security Company so hired fulfills all the requirements of law especially with regard to deployment of guards. Fitness requirement of security guards, proper maintenance of weapons and standard uniform by the security guard of the private security company in accordance with the Punjab Private Security Companies (Regulation and Control) Rules 2003.
- t. Private school administrations be specifically instructed to enhance security measures in and around their schools. If a particular school fails to arrange/adopt security measures to the satisfactory level of local police and district administration the same will not be allowed to operate.
- u. Administration of all schools to ensure thorough and complete search of the entire school premises along with security staff before the start of school timings on daily basis to confirm that no miscreant is hiding for any terrorist activity and then after student be allowed to enter. Report in this regard be also maintained which will be checked/verified by the local police.
- v. No unauthorized person should be allowed to enter the school premises without having confirmed his/her identity and complete body search.
- w. School administration will ensure that at closing time no one is present within the 30 feet radius of school. Moreover, students should move out of the school in piece-meal and not in bulk.
- w. The District Administration and Police authorities should provide necessary technical assistance. Technical assistance will also be provided by the representative of Special Branch and CTD where available.

The District Administration, EDO Education and Police authorities are requested to get the SOPs and the security plans of Schools/Colleges/Universities be prepared and implemented within 48 hours. Special monitoring teams be constituted to check the implementation status.



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A World at School is a movement of hundreds of thousands of people from more than 250 civil society, teacher, faiths, youth, business, international and non-governmental organisations. A World at School has over 500 youth ambassadors campaigning in more than 85 countries across the globe. We believe education is the key to opportunity and the right of every child.

Theirworld (called PiggyBankKids until 2013) is a UK charity, first registered in 2002 dedicated to giving children the best possible chance of living a healthy and happy life.

Theirworld set up the **Global Business Coalition for Education** in 2012. GBC-Education is a US registered non-profit company whose membership includes some of the world's largest companies. GBC-Education has grown to become the single forum connecting business to make a lasting impact on the lives of children and youth through education.

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