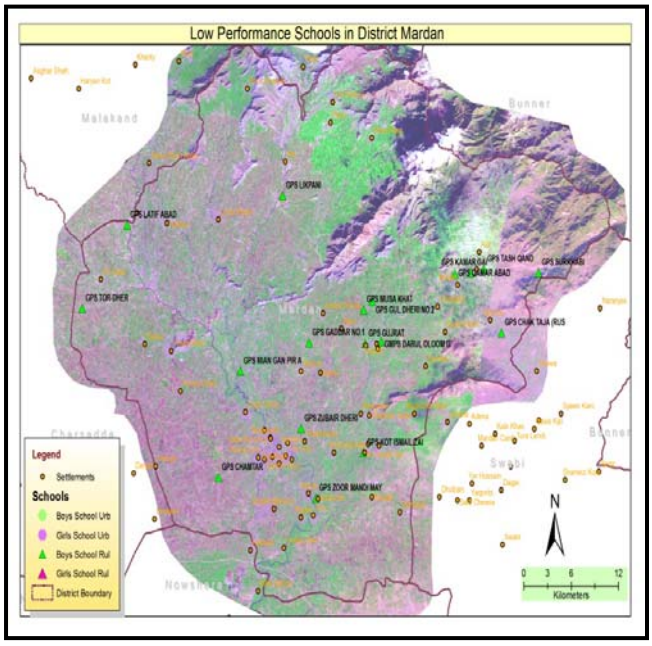
Improving Low Performing Schools:

Implementing a Performance Management Tool for Education in North West Frontier Province, Pakistan

The Program



Two hundred and sixty one low performing schools across 10 districts in North West Frontier Province, Pakistan (Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi, Lower Dir, Chitral, Battagram, Manshehra, Abbottabad and Haripur) have been using performance management to deal with the challenges of key education outcomes such as high repetition rates; and outputs such as lack of a school building, electricity, water, and boundaries. They have also activated Parent Teacher Councils, and important mechanism to involve the community in education issues.

With support from a program funded by the United States Agency for International Development, district and provincial stakeholders are using data from the existing Education Management Information System (EMIS), establishing baselines for school performance, developing performance indicators and establishing targets, and developing and implementing district and school action plans to guide service improvements.

Education has always been claimed as one of the priority areas by all governments in Pakistan. However, low literacy rates and poor quality of education has resulted in the highest percent of children who drop out of school before completing grade 5 in South Asia. According to UNESCO only 70 percent of students beginning primary school actually complete it in Pakistan. To deal with this issue, the USAID funded Districts That Work (DTW) project developed and implemented a Performance Management Tool (PMT) for education.

How They Do It

The program involves the use of the principles and tools of performance management (excel based tools #1, #2, and #3 developed by DTW) and comprises of the following steps:

- Conducting a situational analysis of all targeted schools.
- Selecting *key performance indicators* from the EMIS and ranking schools to identify the low performing schools (using tool #1)[1]. School and district officials and community members (parents) decide which of the following KPI(s) will be used: promotion rate, repetition rate, drop-out rate, and percent of repeaters at a specific grade.
- Choosing *common performance indicators* from the EMIS to explain poor performance (using tool #2)[2]. Common performance indicators are those that may either directly or indirectly be causing poor performance of the KPIs, for example: the teacher-student ratio, number of parent-teacher committee meetings held in a year, lacking or missing infrastructure in the school, and teacher absenteeism.
- Re-ranking the schools using both key and common performance indicators and the school scorecard tool (tool #3)[3].
- Developing district action plans.
- Validating data on schools. The EMIS data is checked by the schools to ensure that there are no outliers, missing data, or incomplete forms. For unexpected data schools seek explanatory information to explain why performance is better or worse than expected.
- Training master trainers on developing school action plans.
- Developing school action plans.
- Implementing and monitoring the district and school action plans.
- Reporting regularly to stakeholders.

The steps were implemented in the districts over a period of 12 months and showed astounding results!

Making It Happen

The 10 districts of NWFP have made remarkable progress in using the performance management tools, and based on their success DTW was requested by the Provincial Secretary Education to expand this assistance to an additional 7 districts in NWFP – denoting the use of this tool across the entire province! Some of the highlights achieved are as follows:

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[1] The Excel template for PMT #1 examines the previous 2-3 year EMIS data for the key performance indicators and arranges them in descending order with the highest KPI scores on the top. The top thirty schools having the highest Repetition Rate / Dropout Rate / Percent of Repeaters are selected from each district. If the district is considering two or more KPIs, districts identify the lowest performing schools based on each KPI, and then select only the common schools which fall among the lowest performing schools for each indicator.

[2] PMT #2 identifies the common performance indictors from the EMIS with the worst scores.

[3] PMT #3 is a school scorecard rating tool. Officials and parents first assign weights and give ranking values / scores to each indicator. The tool calculates the cumulative weight, and use the total weighted score to assign a performance result of poor, below average, average, good, and excellent.

Abbotabad decreased:

- The repetition rate (proportion of students who repeat a grade once or twice) by 67 percent
- Schools without electricity by 56 percent
- Schools without drinking water by 78 percent

Battagram decreased:

- The repetition rate by 49 percent
- Schools without electricity by 23 percent

Charsadda decreased:

- The repetition rate by 34 percent
- Schools without electricity by 63 percent

Chitral decreased:

- The repetition rate by 25 percent

Haripur decreased:

- The repetition rate by 45 percent
- Schools without electricity by 64 percent
- Schools without water by 86 percent
- Schools without boundary walls by 90 percent

Lower Dir decreased:

- The repetition rate by 33 percent
- Schools without electricity by 50 percent
- Schools without boundary walls by 70 percent

Mansehra decreased:

- Repetition rate by 45 percent
- Schools without electricity by 57 percent
- Schools without water by 50 percent
- Schools without boundary walls by 67 percent

Nowshera decreased:

- Repetition rate by 25 percent
- Schools without water by 80 percent

Mardan decreased:

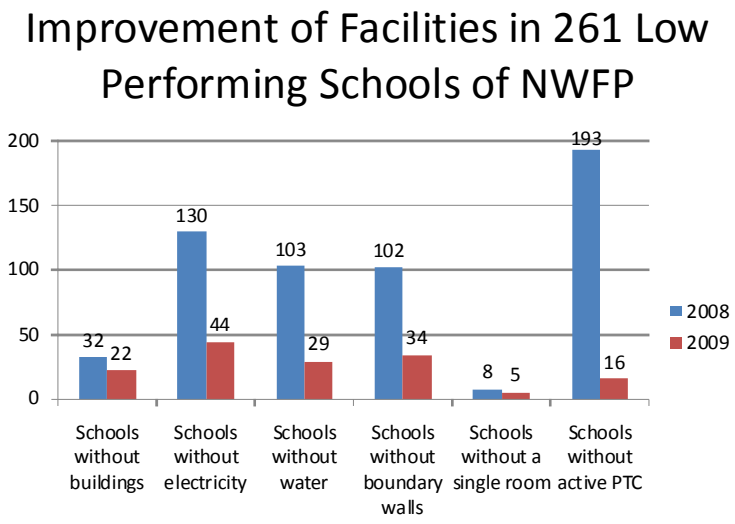
- Schools without electricity by 33 percent

Swabi decreased:

- Repetition rate by 53 percent
- Schools without electricity by 71 percent
- Schools without boundary walls 75 percent

Sustainability

The 10 districts implementing the performance management tools have seen substantial results in (i) decreasing the repetition rates in the low performing schools, (ii) improving the facilities, and (iii) making the Parent Teacher Councils more active (non-active PTC are those having less than 8 meetings in a year). The expansion of this tool across all 17 districts in the North West Frontier Province shows the value of this program.



Overall, one year of implementing and monitoring the district and school action plans resulted in:

- Reduction in the number of low performing schools from 261 to 29, an 89 percent improvement.
- Realization of 70 percent of the district action plans.

- Improvement in school infrastructure with 66 percent of low performing schools now having electricity; 72 percent getting water; and 67 percent having a boundary wall.
- Activation of the Parent-Teacher Council in 92 percent of low performing schools.

Another significant achievement of this tool is that it encourages districts to use the EMIS data that is collected and updated annually; but in the past primarily compiled and sent to the provincial government without much analysis and use for evidence-based decision making. This change in behavior and its corresponding results in governance led to the full support of the Performance Management Tools by the EMIS cell for NWFP. The Secretary Elementary & Secondary Education Department, Government of NWFP, has also appreciated the program.

> The Executive District Officer for Education in Charsada said *"this exercise has opened our eyes for effectively using the EMIS system and we will utilize the same process in future for evaluation of schools".*

The success of the Performance Management Tool in NWFP has also led 15 districts in Sindh and 13 districts in Punjab province to implement this program.

The USAID funded Districts That Work project was implemented by the Urban Institute in 30 districts and 30 Tehsil / Taluka Municipal Administrations in Sindh, Punjab, and North West Frontier Province, Pakistan from August 2006 to March 2010.