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Introduction

The Girl Child Project was initiated on an experimental basis in 1991 by the Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP) with the assistance of UNICEF and CIDA. What began as a pilot project in ten locations has evolved, four phases and ten years later, into a model project guided and supported by UNICEF and with assistance from the Swiss Development and Co-operation Programme. To date it has been replicated in more than three hundred village and city locations.

The project was launched to address the needs of adolescent girls between the ages of 11 and 18 years from rural and urban low-income families. More specifically it aimed to raise awareness about the situation of girls and young women in families and communities; to promote health, education and economic self-reliance; to provide girls with knowledge and skills; to encourage them to participate in the development process; and to equip them to serve as peer role models and agents of change in their local environments; and to empower girls and women to improve their own status in families and communities. To achieve all these objectives the project has evolved a multi-dimensional approach made up of a sequence of implementation strategies with a set of supporting mechanisms and methodologies.(1)

Now that ten years of project implementation are due to end in 2001, this assessment report has been commissioned by UNICEF to examine the match between objectives and achievements, to identify omissions and lessons learned and to suggest future directions which the project might take, This assessment is primarily based on an examination of available documentation on the project including earlier evaluations; discussions with the FPAP personnel at national and local levels, girl participants and their families, community leaders and school staff as well as observations of the many different project activities in a wide range of locations and circumstances in May 2001.(2)

1. Project Implementation

1.A Beneficiaries and Targeting

It is entirely appropriate that this project specifically aim at addressing the needs and rights of adolescent girls in lower-income communities who are simultaneously one of the most disadvantaged, neglected and marginalised of social categories in Pakistan.(3) This is one of the two projects targeting adolescent girls in Pakistan and it is the most important in terms of scale and outreach in low-income locations.

- a. *Adolescent girls are disadvantaged by family and community attitudes and practices* which deprive them of opportunities and resources for equal education, health care and food supply; restrict their mobility in educational, economic and social activities; make heavy demands on their domestic labour prior to early and arranged marriage. Their needs are not only self-evident, but this is a responsive age-group with the capacities and potential to contribute to their own self-development, the care of this and the next generation and to family and community development.
- b. *The locations chosen for the project include both rural and urban low-income communities* where there are few government facilities or pre-existing development initiatives. Most of the rural locations are concentrated in poor agricultural, isolated and even border regions where frequently there are no or very few opportunities for girls to either enter or graduate from primary school; in the cities, projects are based in schools in poorer slum locations.
- c. *As well as targeting direct beneficiaries, it is a major priority of the project that it solicit the support of and influence attitudinal and behavioural changes among peers, families and communities.* Hence the project targets include the families, schools and communities of and adolescent girl participants are encouraged to participate in and influence community activities through direct community action as well as via their own example.
- d. *The project extends throughout Pakistan* with locations in Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, North West and AJ provinces.(See Appendix 1)
- e. *In quantitative terms* Phase 1 of the project(1991-2) was implemented in 10 locations; in Phase 2(1994-5) a further 10 locations were added and by the end of Phase 3(1996-8) the project had been implemented in a total of 130 locations. During Phase 4(1999-2001) it is intended that the project will expand to reach a further 370 locations.(4) Thus by December 2001, it is expected that the project will have been replicated in a total of 500 locations.
- f. *In each of these locations, the project aims at directly benefiting 50 adolescent girls making for a total of 25,000 direct beneficiaries in addition to influencing their peers, siblings and their 25,000 families.* On the assumption that each project is expected to influence its own plus three contiguous communities it is anticipated that by the end of 2001 the project will benefit a total of 2000 communities or 4 million persons.

1.B Strategy and Process

The project has evolved a multi-dimensional strategy based on communities in the rural areas and schools in city-slum locations. The main difference between the community-based and school-based models is that, in the latter, government schools provide the entry-point into and focus for activities with teachers playing a greater role in the selection of girl participants and in

liaison with their families.(5) Nevertheless, once a community or school has been selected for project implementation, the content and processes of each model are similar and comprise a number of common and core components which are sequentially implemented. The two core components common to both models aim to attract family and community support for the project and to enhance the knowledge and skills of girl participants.

a. Open Sessions

Once the project location has been selected, the project facilitators meet separately with the men and with the women of the community in Open Sessions designed to acquaint them with the project, to identify and discuss the local conditions and needs of girls and young women and to obtain a consensus for further action and community support for the project. The Open Sessions are conducted by specially-trained facilitators from the girl Child and Women's Empowerment sections of FPAP and follow a set format based on imparting relevant local, national and international information, participatory discussions and consensus building to mobilise community support.

- i. *The outdoor Open Session observed was attended by around fifty women of all ages* who listened attentively and fully contributed to the discussions. Although the location was only 30 minutes from Islamabad and on the outskirts of Rawapindi city, there was a female literacy rate of 5 per cent, no dispensary and only recently had a girls'college been established.
- ii. *The two women facilitators were informed, skilled in communication and encouraging of participation.* They introduced the project, the work of FPAP, the government, SAARC and United Nations in supporting the rights of the child including girls, cited examples from their own experiences as well as case-studies derived from previous project hisotires to amplify their points and encouraged the women of the community to identify and discuss their needs and those of their daughters.
- iii. *The posters and communication materials were colourful and altogether there was a positive and constructive atmosphere making for co-operation and consensus.* Two of the main messages that were well received were that girls might be more equal if they too received the same family and community support as their brothers and families might benefit from daughters' own self-development, education and skill acquisition.
- iv. *The community leaders hovered at the entrance to the women's meeting and were preparing for a similar meeting for the men of the community.*
- v. *Towards the close of the Open Session articulate and supportive women from the community either volunteered or were encouraged to become members of a Contact Group.*

b. Contact Groups

Both male and female Contact Groups, made up of approximately ten to fifteen participants of the Open Sessions, are established to identify appropriate girl beneficiaries, mobilise community support, maintain regular contact with the project and facilitate follow-up action. Once Contact Groups are formed, they are given a pack of materials providing further information on the project and criteria for the selection of girl participants. After they have selected the girl participants, they are expected to meet regularly and liaise with the facilitators and participants of the project thus acting as a continuing link between the project and community.

- i. *There is every evidence that Contact Groups play their expected role at the outset of the project.*
- ii. *There is some evidence that throughout the life of the project, Contact Groups take a keen interest in the progress of the project maintaining regular contact with girl participants.*
- iii. *There is less evidence that, after the completion of the project, Contact Groups facilitate follow-up activities in the communities.*

c. Orientation Workshop

Orientation Workshops offer five days of initial education and activities for girl participants and, although the form and content of orientation workshops will vary at each location depending on the literacy levels, location and socio-cultural background of the participants, they have several common components. They disseminate information on practical matters such as health, hygiene, nutrition and sanitation and education; raise the awareness of girls about their roles and status; and identify their needs and interests in order to acquaint them with their equal rights to education, health and recreation. In discussions with girl participants in a number of locations and in the Orientation Workshop observed there were a number of common characteristics.

- i. *There was every sign that girls were aware of the disadvantages they suffered in their families and communities* and their lack of equality compared to boys of the same age. In both responses to questions and on wall-lists compiled in Workshops, they enumerated inequalities in access to schooling, health care and food; restrictions on their mobility, leisure time and recreation; lesser family attention and investment and exclusion from decision-making especially in matters to do with their education and marriage arrangements.
- ii. *During the Workshops they become aware of child rights to equality and the equal rights of girls* especially with regard to education. There was every indication that they were also aware of their responsibility to negotiate these rights through communication, negotiation and in a spirit of co-operation with their parents and families.

- iii. *The new information they had acquired covered a range of topics from personal hygiene, sanitation to nutrition and diet.* For many girls it was the first time they had received such knowledge and they showed much interest in and, some years later, they could remember the key messages.
- iv. *The Workshops encouraged girls to listen attentively,* to talk through problems, identify solutions and confidently encourage others or provide leadership in effecting change among their peers and in their families and communities.
- v. *The Workshops provided opportunities for girls to express their thoughts* in words, poems and drawing and it was very clear that the participants enjoyed and were appreciative of meeting with project facilitators and of mixing with their peers in group activities and discussions. For many this Workshop provided the first opportunity in their lives exchange experiences and ideas.
- vi. Originally there had been a second Leadership Workshop to encourage the development of leadership skills among a selected number of participants, but now the orientation programme as a whole includes practice in skills to enhance the capacity for leadership among all girls.
- vii. *By the end of the Workshop phase, girls are aware of the importance of acquiring new knowledge and skills and they are then given an opportunity to either train for Home-School teaching, in First Aid or in a productive skill.*

d. Home-School Training

Home School training was a popular option especially among those who had received several years of education and more than a third of the girls in each Orientation Workshop chose to participate in training classes in the transmission of literacy and numeracy skills. Subsequently each girl is provided with a home-school kit which includes a blackboard, chalk and wall posters. It is anticipated that teaching in home schools will provide girls with a source of income and self- and community-respect and, at the same time, provide a useful service for children in the community.

- i. *In the project locations visited, the majority of those receiving home school training have gone on to establish home schools that cater for different levels of pupil literacy.* Most rural home schools provide introductory literacy and numeracy classes for those who have never been to school, have yet to enter school or those who have been withdrawn from school. In cities, the majority of home schools are for school pupils who want help with homework or extra coaching - often because the standards of the schools are perceived to be wanting.

- ii. *The home schools visited* were mostly located in a large room or in the courtyard of the house of the girl teacher although, in one village, a special room had been built by the village for the home school and other village services. The standard blackboard, chalk and colourful posters issued to each teacher were very much in evidence and most of the pupils had their own books which sometimes had been purchased by the teachers rather than by the pupils.
- iii. *In the schools observed*, pupils ranged in number from 5 to 30 and in age from 3-4 to 14-15 years and all were receiving tuition in basic Urdu, English letters and basic vocabulary and numeracy.
- iv. *Many of the school-age girls attending home schools had not been permitted by their families to attend government or other schools* and, in one or two poor and remote villages visited, even the home schools have not developed as they might because local families still refused permission for village girls to attend any school. In contrast in another rural location a home school had been established for five years and had become the normal stepping stone to primary school for both boys and girls of the village.
- v. *The majority of the village home-school classes took place for three hours each afternoon* with urban home schools occupying shorter hours mainly because they provided homework or coaching classes.
- vi. *The young home school teachers were very committed to and encouraging of their pupils* with many giving two to three hours each weekday afternoon to teach their pupils over and above their own schooling. Some but not all of the teachers earned a small remuneration from the teaching ranging from a few tens of rupees in most cases to an unusual 1000 rupees a month. However in many villages the teachers did not receive any fees because the families were said to be too poor to pay and many would have withdrawn their children from the home school if fees had been charged.
- vii. *The girl teachers were pleased to earn a small payment* but, where they did not, they still felt they were acquiring a skill and experience and providing a community service which earned them the respect of their pupils, siblings and families many of whom took considerable pride in the achievements of the girl teachers.

e. First Aid Training

The first-aid training classes appealed to girls who were practically-minded and liked using their hands and those with little or no literacy were not excluded from acquiring this skill. Approximately fifteen girls chose to be trained in first aid which included preventing and reducing infection, dressing and bandaging and elementary health care, hygiene and nutrition. Each girl is provided with a First-Aid Case which contains anti-septic lotions, dressings and bandages.

- i. *The First-Aid Cases were much in evidence in the project visits with all showing signs of considerable use.*
- ii. *Each girl trained in first aid could cite examples where her skills and supplies had helped a friend, family or community member* who had suffered an injury perhaps involving sprained or broken limbs, or the treatment of burns, cuts, snake-bites or other wounds.
- iii. *Most of the girls did not receive any payment* for aiding their families although neighbours might pay between 1 and 5 rupees which the girls used to replenish their first aid cases. Where girls did not receive any payment they often found it difficult to keep their cases fully stocked.
- iv. *As in home-schools, the girls trained in first-aid valued their new skills* and again they welcomed any opportunity to use these skills and earn self- and family or community appreciation and respect.

f. Skill Training

Approximately fifteen girls in each project location had chosen to acquire productive skills which they hoped would earn them remuneration and supplement family incomes. The skills which presently are offered to the girls include sewing, embroidery, dress-making and make-up although there are plans to widen the range to include block-printing, leather work and other handicrafts. In addition to the skills, training is to include lessons in entrepreneurship including an elementary knowledge of marketing, credit and other business activities. This is a popular choice for girls, but it is also the least developed of the options available for project participants largely because training is awaiting local market survey and feasibility studies.

- i. *In several of the locations visited, the 15 to 20 or so girls who had opted for skill training had not yet received any training* unlike their counterparts in home school and first-aid training. This was said to be because it was still unclear which skills would be useful or appropriate for them to acquire or and there had not yet been a market feasibility study. In these locations, the girls expressed great concern at the delay in their training and very much wanted to know when they were going to receive skill training.
- ii. *In the two locations where girls had received skill training, they had learned a new or improved an existing skill in dress-making* and their completed garments were displayed with a sense of great achievement and pride. In the one village location where girls had received training in dressmaking, they were pleased with their new skills, but they were also frustrated because after the completion of their training they had no access to any sewing machines and their families were said to be too poor to purchase a machine.

- iii. *Most of the village and city girls intended to make their own clothes with only a few of the more talented and experienced intending to dressmaker for the market.* One exceptionally talented older girl, who had improved her skills via training, charged 20 to 30 rupees per garment and earned up to 1000 rupees a month. Those that intended to generate an income were concerned about how they would manage the logistics to purchase materials or market their products given the restrictions on working together and their mobility. Many thought that they would have to fulfil orders brokered by middle-men or rely on family members and particularly to act on their behalf.
- iv. *Presently almost all the girls who had acquired productive skills used them for income-saving rather than for income-generation,* but again they were proud of their new skills and enjoyed new respect from families and neighbours.

1.C Supporting Mechanisms and Methodologies

It is quite clear that the project has enjoyed the long-term strategic guidance and practical support from UNICEF's Advocacy and Communication Programme in Islamabad and from regional UNICEF offices which have continuously nurtured this project to its great advantage. The project has also benefited from financial assistance from the Swiss Development and Co-operation Programme which has allowed for expansion and sustainability. Within Pakistan the project has also benefited from the support of the government and especially of the Minister for Women's Development. However it is the FPAP which has had overall practical responsibility for the project's implementation, management and co-ordination.

a. Management and Co-ordination

Although the project is cost-effective and requires very little recurring expenditure after the initial purchase of communication kits and expenses of training, the concentration of inputs and the rapid expansion of the project requires cost-effective operational co-ordination and management.

- i. *The project has had the advantage of support from FPAP which has the requisite experience, skills and managerial capacity to manage and co-ordinate this project.* FPAP itself is a major non-government organisation and pioneering voluntary agency in the field of family planning, responsible parenthood and reproductive health which includes a concern for rural community development and women's empowerment.
- ii. *The project locations themselves are clustered in the thirteen focus areas of FPAP operations* and it is evident that this concentration enables the project to draw on the support and services of local, regional and national FPAP staff and especially those in the women's empowerment, community development and reproductive health

sections.

- iii. *There is both clear documentary and field evidence of a clear mandate, work plans and schedules for the development and spread of the project* which confirm the full support of FPAP and the experience and talented of committed project staff.
- iv. *Where the Girl Child project follows on from previous FPAP initiatives, there is evidence of an accumulative interaction between this and other projects of FPAP.*(5) For example in one location visited where the Girl Child project followed on from a women's empowerment project, it was quite clear that a school teacher, who had benefited from the previous FPAP women's empowerment project, was very important in the preparation for, the implementation of and follow-up activities of the local Girl Child project.
- v. *FPAP is an appropriate executing agency for the Girl Child Project in that staff felt that they have a long-term interest in 'tomorrow's women' and gave the project due and careful attention.* Many FPAP staff also thought that the Girl Child project had proved to be a very effective entry point for improving the reproductive health and the acceptance of family planning in project locations. The only disadvantage for FPAP is that sometimes there has been some suspicion of project objectives because of the reference to family planning in its name. This has had to be overcome in conservative locations, but the advantages of FPAP leadership far outweigh this initial hindrance.

b. Communication and Learning

At the core of the project is an emphasis on communication with girls, families and communities and UNICEF and FPAP are responsible for an array of promotional and educational materials which include information and guidance for communities, participants, facilitators and trainers.

- i. *The content of project materials show evidence of careful preparation, due consideration of content and are attractive and colourful in presentation.*
- ii. *The importance of MEENA as a vehicle for education and as a role model* is very evident. The girls enjoy the MEENA posters, stories and booklets and particularly impressed by her confidence, her desire to move ahead and the way she solved problems
- iii. *Many of the project components are designed to enhance the communication skills of participants by emphasising collective and activity-based learning.* The project makes every effort via the activity-based learning methodologies of its workshop and training programmes to be participatory and inter-active in order to develop the

inter-personal skills and collective responsibility as well as increase their access to new information. Girls are encouraged to articulate their individual experience, share experiences and recognise and analyse their common experiences.

- iv. *Participants not only had access to new information and practise in new skills*, but they were also provided with new opportunities for self-expression via role play, drawings and poems.(6)
- v. *In very many rural locations, community restrictions and practices meant that this was one of the first occasions where girls of this age group, whether or not they were in school, met to exchange life experiences, acquire such information and life-skills and register their own opinions.* In urban locations, because participatory and inter-active learning is rarely part of the regular pedagogical practices in Pakistan's schools, city girls appreciated this extra-curricular opportunity to discuss issues and skills via novel participatory and activity-based learning practices.

c. Leadership and Training

The training of facilitators and resource persons has been an important component of the project to maintain project quality, achieve expansion and maximise outreach.

- i. The recruitment and training of Girl Child project and other facilitators who are responsible for the Open Sessions, Orientation Workshops and overall implementation of training for girl participants is the key to the success of the project and FPAP is determined to maintain high standards in training.
- ii. The training of resource persons for home school , first aid and skill development is very necessary to pursue the project-training schedules for girls and to reduce the bottlenecks in project progress occasioned by a shortage of trained resource persons. The FPAP has plans to expand such training programmes, detailed national and provincial schedules and has developed and revised training modules and materials to improve the content and increase the rate of skills training.(8)
- iii. The training modules and materials produced and disseminated incorporate both the messages and activity-based methodologies of the programme and are themselves well-designed and participatory.
- iv. The training programmes are periodically monitored by both UNICEF and FPAP staff.

d. Monitoring and Evaluation

There is an awareness of the importance of extensive and effective monitoring to maintain the quality of the project especially during the recent and rapid expansion. Equally there has

been considerable attention given to soliciting evaluations of the project by staff and participants to encourage revisions and improvements in project design and implementation.

- i. *There are comprehensive and extensive mechanisms and tools in place for monitoring* which consist of periodic field visits at different levels which are undertaken UNICEF and FPAP national and regional office staff.
- ii. *There is a system of self-reporting and submission of detailed work plans and schedules for the monitoring of progress* by focal field offices and project staff which are very much in evidence in their offices.
- iii. *Monitoring indicators are mainly quantitative* and include numbers of project sessions and training schemes and numbers of locations, communities, schools, families and girls reached. Less attention has been given to longer term output indicators such as changes in the access of girls to education, health care, food and recreation.
- iv. *Evaluation is encouraged by field-based visits of national and regional UNICEF and FPAP staff and the continual movement of local project staff between field and office.* It is also facilitated by providing participants with an opportunity in national and provincial meetings to feed back their experience of the project. The first seminar on the Girl Child project was held in 1999 and another is planned for the end of 2001. These together with provincial Girl Child seminars designed to encourage and facilitate participant review of progress, expression of views and suggestions for improvements.
- v. *Examples of revisions resulting from evaluation and feedback* include changes in the curriculum of Orientation Workshops, enhancing the role of community support and expanding the content of and improving home school, first aid and skills training modules and giving more emphasis to reproductive health education.
- vi. *In addition there have been two external evaluations of the project.* One was undertaken in 1993 which recommended that more emphasis be given to skill training, leadership training of all girls and community support.(9) The second consisted of a sustainability study conducted in 1999 by the Swiss Development and Co-operative programme for its own purposes.(10) Both incorporated astute observations on the activities of the project and insights relevant for shaping the future development of the project.

2. Project Assessment

One means of measuring the success of a project is to assess the scale and pace in distribution and in implementation. It was reckoned in May 2001 that the programme had reached the targeted number of girls, families and communities, but it was also estimated that it was less likely to achieve the targeted new 220 locations by the end of 2001 despite

every effort to do so. Although it is anticipated that the project may just fall short of its intended scale and distribution, it is nevertheless a substantial achievement that the expansion of the project has proceeded at such a rapid pace since 1999. However to emphasise these quantitative measures to the exclusion of other factors is to miss a number of truly innovative and creative features. To fully appraise the achievements of the project, its objectives have been divided into strategic and practical objectives and assessed separately.

2.A Practical Objectives

Practical gender objectives can be categorised as those that seek to address the practical needs of girls and improve their existing life conditions and chances by enhancing their access to educational and health facilities and provide opportunities for income-saving and generation. Within the project there has been a major emphasis on improving the education, health care and skills of adolescent girls.

a. Education:

Pakistan has one of the lowest female literacy rates in the world hence it is entirely appropriate that the project emphasises the importance of literacy and education yet not exclude girls who have never been to or are no longer in school. The importance assigned to literacy and education is evident in the Orientation Workshop programme and is reflected in the attention given to the local establishment of home schools.

- i. *The girls in each of the many locations visited were aware of the necessity of literacy and education for their own self- and skills-development* and the many difficulties which girls, particularly in rural areas, face in achieving equal access to schooling.
- ii. *In rural projects, the numbers of adolescent girls who had never entered primary school, been withdrawn or left after primary school formed a substantial majority of project participants.* In some villages about half the girl had never been to school largely because they had not received the requisite permission of their parents.
- iii. *Many project participants still in school expressed a desire to continue with their education* but very few girls, who were no longer in school, returned to continue their education. Unusually in one village, four of the girl had gone back to school. In principle, home schools also provide an opportunity for adolescent girls to acquire elementary literacy and numeracy, but in practice few older girls were among the pupils.
- iv. *Although the girl participants were not always able to continue with their schooling or re-enter school, many could cite examples of their influence on the schooling of a sibling or neighbour as a result of their new appreciation of the importance of education.*

- v. *Although home schools did not always attract adolescent girls as pupils, they did offer an opportunity for literate girls to provide a facility for educating the younger illiterate* and many home school pupils did include girls of middle-childhood age who had never had the chance to go to school.
- vi. *In one village the community had built a special activity-room for home school and other community services*, but in contrast, in other rural locations, it was only after some persuasion that girls were permitted to attend home schools. In one village visited it was still had not been possible for girls to get permission to attend home schools.

b. Health Care

Within the project there is a major emphasis on health education stressing the importance of personal and environmental hygiene, diet, nutrition and basic health care. Health education is a substantial component of the Orientation Workshop programme and its importance is also reflected in the emphasis on first aid training.

- i. *The girls showed every indication of understanding the importance of health education* and the importance of new practices in hygiene and sanitation for their own survival and development and the well-being of young siblings, peers and families. The attitudes they expressed and new practices which they reported suggested that they had received and remembered these important health messages many of which, they said, were new to them.
- ii. *Several parents, teachers and community leaders remarked on the changes in household, school and community practices as a result of project influence.* Examples they cited included the new use of soap, clean latrines and rubbish clearance.
- iii. *The girls who had been trained in first aid had acquired new practical skills* such as cleansing wounds, bandaging limbs and the treatment of insect and snake bites. The importance attached to training in and practice of first aid skills and their obvious benefit for recipient family and neighbours informed and attracted the positive attention of peers, families and neighbours.
- iv. Unusually, one girl who had undertaken first aid training, had been selected to enter training to become a lady health worker. She had applied on her own initiative and received the permission of and support from her family.

c. Productive Skills

The project emphasised the importance assigned to skill training and acquiring productive skills as a source of income and a timely occupation for an age group waiting for marriage and in the meantime either preoccupied with field or domestic chores or having time on their

hands.

- i. *Skill training was a popular option among girl participants* and reflected the importance girls attached to skill acquisition in the hopes of generating an income and supplementing family resources.
- ii. *The majority of girls who had received training had acquired some skills in dress-making, sewing and embroidery* and were pleased with their new skills which the majority of girls intended to use to make clothes for personal use or for family members and so tended to be income saving rather than income generating. A few talented girls had used the training to improve existing skills and had already or planned to produce for individual orders or for the market.
- iii. *Most girls were unable to achieve their practical objectives either because they did not have the resources or means to procure machines or because they were hindered by restrictions on their mobility and thus access to materials and markets.* This rendered them dependent on family members and particularly on the support of brothers which was not always forthcoming.
- iv. *Skill acquisition was the option least likely to constitute a source of income generation but it was income-saving.*

Despite these qualifications the overall emphasis of the Girl Child on education, health care and productive skills alongside training in home school, first aid and skill development does meet the practical objectives of improving the lives and life-skills of the girl participants, provide a service for families and communities and most importantly constitutes a source of self-respect thus fulfilling one of the strategic objectives of the project.

2.C Strategic Objectives

Strategic objectives seek to challenge cultural norms of gender inequality and modify attitudes and behaviours towards girls in families and communities. To fully assess the strategic objectives of the project these have been divided into three separate but linked categories:

- a. an increase in awareness of girl child issues in the context of child rights;
- b. the encouragement of girls' participation in community activities to improve health, nutrition and education of girls, women, families and communities; and
- c. the empowerment of girls to communicate with others and address the common problems of girls in Pakistan.

a. Awareness

The principle aim of the Girl Child Project was to raise awareness about discriminatory attitudes and practices against girl children and encourage girls to take action to improve the status of girls in Pakistan.

- i. *In discussions and in their response to questions, girls showed a distinctive awareness of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours common in their own homes and communities.* They emphasised the ways in which girls are denied equal access to food, education, health care and leisure, the restrictions on their movement, inequality in the allocation of domestic chores, their lesser freedoms compared to their brothers in marriage and the lack of consultation of girls in family decisions. They also had observed the difference in family attitudes towards girls and boys at birth, in illness, at birthdays and other celebrations and each afternoon on return from school when their more privileged brothers had leisure and tea. They thought that the pursuit of new project activities had been instrumental in giving them a new awareness of the inequalities and restrictions faced by girls in Pakistan when they move beyond customary domestic activities and roles.
- ii. *The girls were not only aware of the dimensions of gender inequality but also of some of its causes.* One of reasons they cited for not having the same rights and privileges as their preferred brothers and for their short-term and secondary importance to their parents was their removal to another family on marriage.
- iii. *A new awareness about the rights of girls to equality was embedded in the notion of child rights* and girls were familiarised with the rights and responsibilities unmerited within Convention on the Rights of the Child(CRC) and the ways in which such rights might be realised.
- iv. *What was very noticeable was the awareness of girls not only of their rights but also of their corresponding responsibilities* and the importance of educating their families and communities about child rights and their exercise via persuasion and negotiation. The equal emphasis on responsibility meant that this new awareness of their rights did not appear to be confrontational and the project had retained the support of parents, teachers and community leaders. This project provides a very interesting example of a rights-based approach in a social context where families and community leaders retain considerable authority and control.

b. Participation

The Girl Child Project encourages girls to participate in school, families and community activities both as role models and as agents of change and it was a very important part of the Orientation Workshop that girls should develop their inter-personal communication skills for capacity-building and for working with rather than against their families and communities in effecting change.

- i. *For many girls the Orientation Workshop was one of the first occasions in which adolescent girls met together and engage in collective activities.* In Workshop

discussions, girls often commented on the novelty of collective activities and their appreciation of this new opportunity to meet and mix with their peers. Many had gained new permissions as a result.

- ii. *In Workshop activities, girls were fully encouraged to relate their experiences and articulate their opinions* and, in discussions about these activities, girls responded with directness and openness in reporting on new knowledge and activities. They expressed their views with confidence and many had newly expressed their thoughts via posters, drawings and poems.
- iii. *In the Workshops, girls were fully encouraged to work together* and it was clear that girls had acquired experience of participatory skills and practices in group activities. They seemed conscious of their individual and collective role in imparting knowledge and in advocating change in communities. Many of the girls could cite examples where they had communicated new knowledge and established new practices in family health and environmental hygiene though they felt they had succeeded to a lesser extent in changing access to education and marriage practices.
- iv. *Parents, community leaders and headmistresses also cited examples where girl project participants had modified the attitudes and behaviours of peers and families in practices to do with hygiene, education, health care and the physical environment.*

c. Empowerment

One of the main aims of the activities of the Girl Child project is to increase the confidence of girls to take initiatives, to influence and to contribute services to families and communities. The project design rightly acknowledges that empowerment rests on a strong sense of self-esteem or self-respect and the activities are designed to foster qualities of self-reliance and self-worth.

- i. *The majority of the Girl Child Project participants were responsive in discussions and expressed their opinions and seemed to communicate with confident words and demeanour.* Several girls and observers have said that as a result of project activities, participants had found 'a voice'. In discussion and activities too leadership skills could be observed among many of the older girls.
- ii. *A number of girls felt that they had acquired a new visibility and voice* as responsible members of their families and communities because of their new knowledge and skills especially in practical matters to do with health, nutrition and sanitation.
- iii. *Parents, community leaders and teachers commonly stated that the programme had increased the confidence of the girls* and their abilities to impart their knowledge and

express opinions clearly and politely.

- iv. *In all these ways the project has been seen to demonstrate the capabilities and contributions of girls when given equal opportunities for self-development.* While it is difficult to ascertain how much self-esteem and empowerment was evident before entry on to the programme or is due to other factors, many of the girl participants were from poor families in remote locations, some had never been to school and many had no previous experience of group or public activities. There was a consensus among girls, parents, teachers and community leaders, and it has been noted in all previous reporting on the Girl Child Project, that it has helped girls overcome shyness and that, as they have become more confident in their own knowledge and abilities and aware of larger issues, they were more secure, co-operative and polite in their inter-personal and family relations.(11)

In sum, the project can be said to have been very successful in achieving a number of strategic objectives by raising individual and collective awareness, participation and confidence of girls. They themselves learned of their own abilities while there is every evidence that, via their positive example, families and community members have also altered their perceptions of girls and begun to appreciate their qualities and potential. In this respect girl participants have acquired new roles as models and as agents of strategic change for increasing the self-esteem and status of girls and for improving gender, family and community relations.

2.C Follow-up and Outreach

a. Outreach

One of the great strengths of the project which is immediately apparent and remarked upon in discussions and in previous reports is its outreach: the attention given to soliciting family and community permission for the project, to encouraging family and community support, and to liaison between project facilitators or participants and family or community members. This community-oriented approach is more apparent in rural than in urban locations where the project is based on the school model.

- i. *The project makes every effort via the Open Sessions and Contact Groups to ensure community support for and ownership of the project.* In the majority of locations, community leaders, teachers and parents, both male and female, showed their full support for the project and its objectives and were appreciative of its presence and the positive differences it had made in the skills, behaviour and confidence of the girls.
- ii. *During the life of the project, village workshops and training activities took place openly within the community* and were informally observed or even attended by young siblings and other family and community members.

- iii. *It was clear that the girls took their outreach role seriously* and spread their new knowledge to peers, families, community members.
- iv. *Many parents and teachers and community leaders said that they themselves had been influenced by the presence of the project,* its messages and its activities especially in hygiene, sanitation, health care and education.
- v. *Many of the rural communities which had been slow to recognise the benefits of the project and let their girls attend activities and home schools had been persuaded to do so* and, in one very conservative location, those that had not yet given permission seemed to be amenable to persuasion.
- vi. *Many men of the communities visited were clearly disappointed that once the project had been completed there had not been any follow-up activities or plans for further projects.* For many this was the first time that a project had been located in their community and, although appreciative of such an intervention, they openly hoped for follow-up activities and resources.

b. Follow-up

The project is a one-off investment and there are very few mechanisms for formal follow-up built into the project. It is anticipated that the community contact groups will encourage the girls informally to continue to meet and pursue project activities and it is assumed that girls will continue with their home-school, first aid and productive activities.

- i. *It is clear that girls continue to practice first aid and conduct home schools* long after the completion of the project and may take these skills to new communities on marriage. They also pursue their sewing but usually for their own use.
- ii. *It is evident that Contact Groups have not normally fulfilled their anticipated role in nurturing follow-up activities.* Indeed the lack of arrows in the design of the Community Model does not show Contact Groups as having a continuing role.(See Appendix 2)
- iii. *Where in two- to four-year old projects there had been some follow-up activities, they have taken the form of irregular meetings and a few activities such as clearing rubbish or cultivating a garden.*
- iv. *In one four-year old project,* follow-up meetings and activities were almost solely due to the presence of a supportive village school teacher who had participated in a FPAP women's empowerment project prior to the establishment of the Girl Child Project.
- v. *Present and past participants in the project were vocal in their request for follow-up*

- activities to extend the new learning and skills acquired during the project.* Many girls, parents and especially male community members and leaders felt that new activities had been begun - only to be curtailed prematurely.
- vi. *There are few formal mechanisms in place to foster follow-up initiatives which encourage girls trained in home schools and first aid to become lady health workers and female school teachers* which is surprising given the acute shortages of such personnel who will work and reside in Pakistan's villages.
 - vii. Recent initiatives to encourage follow-up include the publication of a newsletter and the compilation of a data base.

3. Future Directions and Recommendations

There are four main dimensions of this project which are pertinent in assessing options for directing the future and making practical recommendations. These concern the boundaries and balance between strategic and practical objectives and the shortfalls in and tensions between replicability and sustainability.

3.A Strategic Directions

This project is important for the unusual emphasis it has placed on meeting strategic objectives and making changes not only in the attitudes and behaviours of girls but also in family and community perceptions and practices. Such an explicit and long-term strategic approach is rare. In taking this approach the project has been very successful in its Orientation Workshops and Training Sessions in raising the awareness and confidence of girls, demonstrating the abilities and capacities of girls and increasing respect for girls among family and community members. Redefining attitudes and behaviours is not only a slow and sensitive process but also long-term and thus constitutes a very important and necessary first step in what is an elongated and accumulative process.

- a. *It is recommended that this important and unique project should continue to be replicated in new locations* but with some modifications in its practical objectives and with extended linkages or alliances beyond the local to make for sustainability.
- b. *It is recommended that, in addition to Open Sessions for women and men and Orientation Workshops for girls, there be at least one separate open session for boys* who as brothers, peers and future husbands and fathers could benefit from an introductory session on the key messages of the project. This would include a significant group presently left out of the project target groups and meet a constant demand by participants for their inclusion.

2.B Practical Objectives

- a. *The project is fulfilling very successfully its practical objectives in the Orientation*

Workshop and training sessions for Home Schools and in First Aid.

By any yardstick the project has been successful in training teachers for home schools which are themselves an established feature in most rural and urban project locations albeit for a range of purposes very much linked to existing educational levels of the pupils. Many of the girl teachers are themselves still in school and any remuneration provides for books for pupils, their own pocket money or supplement family incomes. By any yardstick, the project has also been successful in training participants for first aid and making a simple service available for families, friends and neighbours. The fees resulting from first aid services are very small and mainly used for replenishing kits and for providing very small amounts of pocket money.

- i. *It is recommended that, with the revised models for training for home schools and first aid and with the new plans for increasing the number of resource persons, these evolving facets of the project should continue in their present form.*
- ii. *It is recommended that there be some modification in the objectives of skill training.* Although the project as a whole provides new knowledge and skills and for community service, it has a mixed record in equipping participants with new productive skills which are income-generating.
- b. *The training in productive skills has been the least successful with some considerable lag between this and other categories of training in the majority of project locations.* Most training schedules were delayed because they were awaiting market surveys and feasibility studies. The recent emphasis on market surveys assumes that girls, once trained, would be embarking on substantial entrepreneurial income-generating activities. Previous experience suggests that this is unlikely to be the case because the learning and practical experience of seven-days training is likely to limit the achievements to certain types and levels of skills. In addition difficulties in procuring machines, materials and restrictions on mobility and marketing mean that girls are not likely to embark on a major entrepreneurial enterprise.
 - i. *It is recommended that the objectives of skill training, after the example of home schools and first aid, be centred on the acquisition of a relevant skill which may lead to considerable savings, provide pocket money or generate small amounts of incomes.* Although there is much disquiet in development circles that girls are directed towards home-making skills such as stitching and dress-making, the relevance of these skills for most girls and the observable amount of pride in such achievements more than outweigh any short-term barriers to redefining gender roles. In this way the delays in skill-training due to more ambitious objectives might be reduced.
 - ii. *It is recommended that the three sets of training for girls are standardised which would bring the more limited short-term skill training into line with the other practical components of the project while at the same time still contributing to its*

long-term strategic objectives. Bounded practical objectives are also more likely to expedite the scale and pace of replicability.

3.C Replicability

Previously, and until the model was tested and perfected, the project took a gradualist approach to expansion and only since 1998 has it focused on replicability so that in the past three years the number of project locations has risen from 130 to more than 400.

- a. *It is recommended that, since the project marks a very important first step in an interactive and accumulative process of strategic change in attitudes and behaviours of girls, families and communities, expansion continue to be central in future plans for the project.*
- b. *It is recommended that this expansion be focused on poor rural areas and based on the community model with the school model confined in cities to low-income locations.*
- c. *It is recommended that a feasibility plan for expansion be undertaken to gauge the resources, costs and funding required to expand this project, meet new demands for trained staff and resource persons and facilitate the production and supply of materials.*
- d. *It is recommended that the project, given its sensitive long-terms strategic and concentrated short-term practical objectives and rapid rates of expansion be monitored to maintain standards and ensure sustainability.* It is clear that recent expansion has severally tested project resources in terms of material and human resources and, to keep pace, extra project staff have been recruited and training established for new resource persons in home schools, first aid and skill training.
- e. *It is also recommended that there be a concerted effort at lobbying to get key project approaches and messages included in the education curriculum thereby broadening its leverage and outreach while drawing national attention to the project.*
- f. *f. It is recommended that linkages between project and other agencies beyond the local make for spread and sustainability.*

2.D Sustainability

During the past ten years any tension between horizontal or vertical expansion or between consolidating or spreading its inputs has been resolved in favour of expansion rather than follow-up and sustainability. Without substantial follow-up, the project is in danger of raising the confidence and expectations of girl participants but then stranding them so that

they feel abandoned. So far these girls might be said to have gained a voice but not yet found a place in their communities.

- a. *It is recommended that there be some formal mechanisms for follow-up visits by project staff and scheduled activities to be included in the project design* in order to provide an impetus for arranging periodic meetings, reiterating key messages, compiling records on girl participants for the new data base, encouraging longer-term career trajectories of girl participants and leaving a greater legacy in the community.
- b. *It is recommended that activities aim not only at increasing community ownership but also at providing opportunities for girls to exercise their new confidence and use their new-found skills.* However such activities need not be the responsibility of the Girl Child Project itself of FPAP but be implemented by establishing links with partner agencies including national and provincial government departments and other non-government organisations.
 - i. For example, one way of building upon the project and providing for future income-generating activities would be to establish alliances with education departments with the aim of setting up formal channels for the recruitment and further training of home school teachers and so make up for the lack of village female teachers.
 - ii. For example, the establishment of alliances with departments of health and of formal channels for the recruitment and training girls with first aid training could go some way towards making up for the shortage of rural female health workers.
 - iii. For example the establishment of links with donor agencies specialising in poverty alleviation projects could build upon and extend short-term income saving skills and provide training in longer-term productive and entrepreneurial skills and provide for resources, credit and markets.
- c. *It is recommended that a national consultant be employed for a short period to identify and explore formal follow-up mechanisms to build upon the foundations laid by the project and extend its linkages with other national and provincial agencies.*

Conclusion

This dynamic and purposive project is fulfilling both its strategic objectives and many of its practical objectives. It meets the basic needs of girls by extending their knowledge of health education, child rights and girl child issues and improving their skills in communication and collective activities. More strategically, the Girl Child Project is equipping and encouraging girls to become role models and agents of change in their families, schools and communities and is contributing to positive changes in perceptions and attitudes towards girls by their peers, families and communities.

In sum, in initiating and implementing the Girl Child Project, UNICEF and FPAP are to be complimented on establishing an innovative and cost-effective project for and in support of the girl child and involving of her family, school and community. Moreover this unique programme has evolved a strategic and sustainable approach which with some modifications can be replicated within Pakistan and serve as a role model for other societies where discrimination against adolescent girls remains severe.

References

1. See Appendix 1 for pictorial summary of the project.
2. I am grateful to UNICEF and FPAP for making the arrangements to visit project locations.
3. Sabeeha Hafeez, *The Girl Child in Pakistan* UNICEF Islamabad 1993; UNICEF, *Children and Women in Pakistan: A Situation Analysis 1998* , Islamabad 1998.
4. For Phase 1V Targets See Appendix 2
5. For diagrams of Community and School Models see Appendix 3.
6. For a map showing the distribution of FPAP projects see Appendix 4.
7. Beena Sarwar(ed), *"We are the future": A Story of the Pakistani Girl Child*, FPAP Lahore,1995.
8. FPAP, *Girl Child Programme Strategy for 2001*, mimeo Lahore 2001.
9. Report on the Evaluation of the Girl Child Project, Seers Consultants, 1994.
10. Sabira N. Qureshi, *Sustainability Study of the UNICEF/FPAP Girl Child Project*, Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, 1999.
11. Qureshi, op cit; Sarwar op cit; Saman Asad, 'Why Girls Matter?' *Real Lives*, IPPF, London 2000, Issue 5, pp 13-16.

Methodology

This report is based on an examination of available documentation on the project, interviews and group discussions with national, provincial and local executing agencies, project staff and project participants and observations of many different project activities in a range of locations and circumstances in May 2001.

A. Documents Reviewed

- Advocacy, publicity and training modules for the Girl Child Project.
- Asad Saman, 'Why Girls Matter?' Real Lives, IPPF, London 2000, Issue 5, pp 13-16.
- FPAP, [Girl Child Programme Strategy for 2001](#), mimeo Lahore 2001.
- Hafeez, Sabebha, [The Girl Child in Pakistan](#) UNICEF Islamabad 1993.
- Qureshi, Sabira N. [Sustainability Study of the UNICEF/FPAP Girl Child Project](#), Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, 1999.
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- UNICEF, [Children and Women in Pakistan: A Situation Analysis 1998](#) , Islamabad 1998.
- UNICEF, Report of Advocacy and Communication Programme, UNICEF Islamabad, 27 June 2000.
- UNICEF, The Girl Child Project in Pakistan, UNICEF, Islamabad 2001(mimeo)
- UNICEF-FPAP Project Co-operation Agreements: June 1996-Dec.1998; Feb 1999-Dec. 2001
- UNICEF-Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, Supplementary Funding Proposal 1998-2001.

B . Number of Project Sites Visited

- Open Community Session for Women, Rawapindi
- FPAP Headquarters, Lahore
- Orientation Workshop Tejgarh Punjab(new location 2001)
- Meeting with girls and community members at Jallo, Punjab(1996 location)
- Meeting with girls in skill training and community members, Govind Village, Punjab.
- Home School and First Aid training classes, Tarnab Farm School, NWFP.
- Girls' Skill Training, Sheikhabad, NWFP
- Three Home Schools, Peshawa, NWFP
- Budbheer Village Home School, NWFP
- Gharibabad School(2000 location), Karachi
- Village girls Child Project, Bhit Shah(Hyderabad) Sindh(1996 location)
- Badin project sites, Sindh

C. Categories of Interviews/Group Discussions(May 2001)

- National Staff of FPAP, Lahore.
- National Girl Child Project Staff, Lahore
- Provincial Girl Child Project Staff, NWFP,Punjab and Sindh.
- Local provincial project leaders and managers, NWFP,Punjab and Sindh
- Present Girl Child Project participants
- Past Girl Child Project participants
- Family members of present and past girl participants
- Community leaders of Project Sites
- Teachers at School Project Sites
- Headmistresses at School Project Sites