

Community pressurizes DCO to Open High School in Tola Bangikhel , Mainwali

Case Study Mianwali

According to ASER 2011, 9.7% children are out of school in Mianwali. When collecting data from the Education Department Mianwali to feed information into the District Report Card, we found out that out of 217,330 children going to government schools only 89,555 were girls (See Table 1). There may be several reasons why out of school females are more than males, but in the Tola Bangikhel area of Mainwali, the biggest reason why females are discouraged from going to school is because of conservative mindset of the locals there.

Tola Bangikhel is a hilly area of Kalabagh Tehsil Esakhel District Mianwali. It is 95 KM far from the Mianwali and forms the boundary of Mianwali. The estimated population of this area is around 8700. Mostly people living here in Tola Bangikhel are Pakhtoon. They are known for being very strict and religious. Mostly people are in Army and some retired persons are working in the markets of Kalabagh & Kalabagh Salt Mines. In the whole of Tola Bangikhel there are two primary and one elementary school for girls.

ASER survey was held in Tola Bangikhel last year and this year in April 2012 ASER team went to the village to share findings of ASER through a baithak. The baithak was arranged in a High School of Tola Bangikhel. According to ASER, the village of Tola bangikhel only 88% girls are studying in schools. Importance of girls' education was explained to the community in the baitakh. Many parents were reluctant to send their daughters to schools because of conservative mind set. Interestingly, parents who wanted to educate their girls raised a pertinent point that many girls that graduate from elementary schools have nowhere to go after successful completion of this education level. The closest high school is 13 km away in the nearby village of Shakaradara(KPK). Some parents also said that they tried to enroll their daughters in the High School of Shakardara in KPK but that was very inconvenient for them as they had to change provinces every day.

During the ASER Baitakh we realized that the people of the community lack the right information and the power that they have. They were unaware of the fact that on demand and the community can mobilize itself and inform the education authorities. Villagers didn't even know that there was a District Government office where the DCO and EDO Education sat and these officials responsibility was to cater to the needs of the students in the village. We educated the community that they can write an application to the DCO requesting him to upgrade a school and make it into a high school.

A few days after the ASER Baithak a man from this village, Mr. Ghulam Muhammad Khattak, an advocate came to the ITA office Mianwali with the application for upgradation of a school to a high school. Unfortunately no one had signed that application and there didn't seem to be any push of the community reflected in the application. To that we guided him and told him that simple application was not enough, he had to get signatures of the community to build a strong case in front of the DCO. Mr. Khattak returned to the village and came back after a few days with several signatures of the community members and also attached the NICs of some people.

Satisfied with his application we accompanied him to the DCO's Office where he and the ASER Team pled his case. DCO listened to the claims and agreed to work on it. He forwarded the case to EDO Education for further investigation and clarification. EDO Education in a few days presented a report on this issue to the DCO and after consideration DCO announced that he will upgrade the Girls Elementary School Tornaghi Garbi into a high school and ordered the EDO Edu. to start the classes in the School immediately.

Now Tola Bangikhel has finally got a High School for Girls and with the coming academic year many girls in the village are excited to join school again to finally complete their studies.

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