

Adopt a Student Program

Anjuman-e-Behbood Nuswaan wa Itfaal (ABNI)

September 2007: Report from the Field

Submitted by

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I want to become a nurse.
Maria, Grade 1.



I want to become a
teacher. Saira, Grade 2.

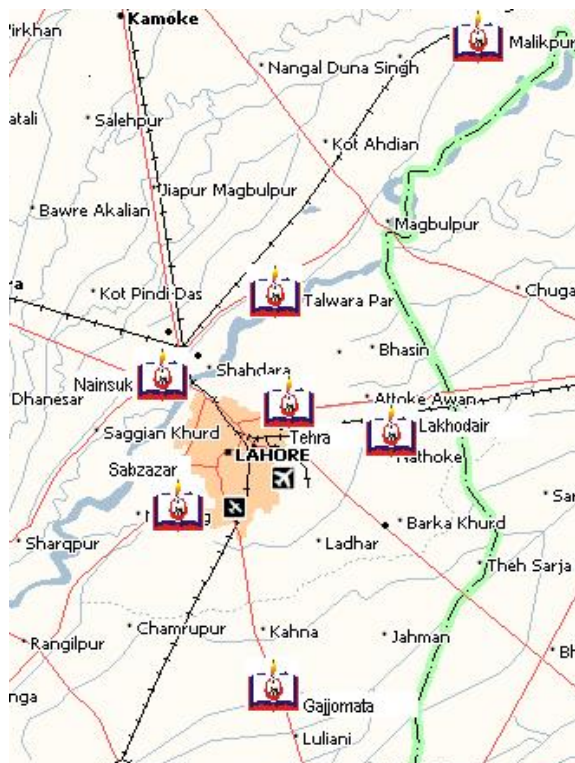
THE 2006-2007 SCHOOL YEAR

At Fatima Memorial Hospital (FMH), we run a large community outreach program to provide free education, books, and uniforms to young students in both formal and non-formal schools. Our program also provides vocational training for older students. At the formal schools, classes start in April and end in March. At the non-formal schools, classes start in September and end in June. The subjects taught include: Science, English, Urdu, Mathematics, Pakistan Studies, and Home Economics (for girls.) To join the program, students are interviewed and then approved by a local community-based organization that verifies and recommends their application for financial support.

Our program joined the Global Giving project catalog on October 5, 2006. Since then, we have received \$2,158 through the Global Giving Website. Using these funds together with support and funding received from FMH, we have been able to provide Rs 227,709 (\$3,760 U.S.) for books and stationary distributed amongst the students of the school. In addition to books and supplies, each of the formal schools has annual operational costs of approximately Rs 275,000 (\$4,550 U.S.).

The program (Adopt a Student/ABNI) serves as a platform for uplifting local communities by placing an emphasis on grassroots empowerment in the rural and outlying urban areas around Lahore. Over the years, the program has expanded its services and so far over 10,000 children and more than 1000 women have benefited from the community based schools and skill development programs in the areas of Lakhodair, Nainsukh, Gajjumatta, Malikpur, Talwara, Tehra, Sooa, and Sabzazar. In 2008 the program will be expanded to address the educational needs of men.

Currently, 70% of our students are girls and young women. There are 2 reasons why the majority of our students are girls. The first is that there are already several existing schools for boys in the area; however, very few if any schools for girls. The second reason speaks to the success and community acceptance of our program- after 30 years of service, we have developed the trust of the local community to teach their daughters.



Communities served by ABNI: Lakhodair, Nainsukh, Gajjumatta, Malikpur, Talwara, Tehra, Sooa, and Sabzazar.



“My name is Mohd Shah and I am in Class 6 at one of the ABNI schools at Lakhodair. I thank you all for giving me a chance to express what I want to be when I grow up. Some of my friends at school want to become a doctor, some engineers and

one boy wants to be a math teacher. Almost all the girls want to be teachers too. Well my dream is to become a pilot one day. I have always wanted to fly. I always admire the planes when they are flying high up in the sky. It looks as if the pilots can reach the stars. I also want to reach the stars. I have decided to study well so that I can become the best pilot in the world! Thank you.

DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS OF NEW FORMAL SCHOOLS

In 1999, after the success of the non-formal schools, ABNI decided to undertake a truly revolutionary project; a formal school in Lakhodair. Our goal was to have the facilities of this school near Lahore be as good as the ones at the best private schools in the city. We also wanted to provide top grade scholastic and extramural facilities so the school could generate the future leaders of the community and of the country. All this would be provided free of cost or at a highly subsidized fee to the children of the community.

The teachers are mostly from the community and are trained by the qualified ABNI team. These teachers are given job benefits including life insurance, graduation and computer training allowances. ABNI shoulders all of the educational expenses including books and stationery for 65% of the students, who attend the school on a non-paying basis.

Since its inception in 1999, the school has grown. We now provide morning and evening programs at the Lakhodair Formal Education Centre. Our morning classes cover nursery school through to the seventh grade. There are currently 13 teachers and 423 students attending school in the morning. 43 students in the sixth to tenth grade attend the evening classes.

Extra-curricular activities are given special importance in the school with the students taking part in debates, quizzes, sports, science, art competitions and skits. The focus of this school is on academics and already the results are exceptional. Registration of 53 students was sent to the Board of Primary and Secondary Education in Lahore in 2005 and 100% pass rate was achieved. The matriculation results in the year 2006 were wonderful with all the students achieving grades above 75%.

The Lakhodair School has become the foundation for a secondary school offering quality education to provide local children with the opportunity to pursue careers in nursing, paramedics and even medicine. This school is the beacon of progress for the Lakhodair community and also serves as a community centre for the adult population after the initiation of the skill development centre and the Primary Health Care Centre. A computer literacy programme has also started in the school. Young women from the community are also undergoing midwifery training at Fatima Memorial Hospital and are eager to serve their community once they have graduated.

Given the success of the Lakhodair School, plans were made to upgrade the informal school in Malikpur to a formal school with all the modern facilities including a fully trained teaching staff. In 2006, 13 non-formal schools of Malikpur were consolidated and upgraded into a formal school. This makes a total of three formal schools that are run by ABNI. Registration of Malikpur School as a formal school is currently under process.

SOME OF THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AT LAKHODIR SCHOOL



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF OLDER STUDENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

At present we have two Skills Development Centres that are primarily for women. The one in Malikpur is working in conjunction with the school in that area. The other is an independent skill development centre that was established in May 2004 near Forman Christian Colony, an urban squatter settlement in the Gulberg area of Lahore.

The objective of these skill development centres is to develop the local crafts and skills in innovative and creative ways. This is to help the communities find commercial accessibility to larger markets and to help increase the household incomes within the communities.



The courses offered include stitching, needle-work, and embroidery. The duration of each course is three months, at the end of which the students are awarded a certificate. More than 230 women have already benefited from this centre. Plans are underway to expand this facility to provide cooking lessons and beautician classes. These types of skills can lead to higher wage-employment and/or self-employment.

Vocational Training Centres for men are also being established. One will start operating in January of 2008 at Nainsukh where we now have non-formal schools. The purpose is to enable male members of the community to become more productive members of the society. The program will forge linkages with local industry by creating a workforce of welders, technicians and skilled laborers. A trained worker would not only have greater potential to find employment in industry, but he could also carry out ancillary production at home. Outsource jobs could be done at home within the community, which in turn would reduce the pressure of urbanization and the resulting disintegration of the nuclear family unit.

“Visiting schools in remote villages with ABNI made me realize that despite the severe deficiency of funds, there were quite a few precocious children who deserved the right kind of guidance from their teachers, most of whom were not very well-educated themselves. I would like to go to similar schools in villages near my home city and teach. These children deserve a life as luxurious as ours and they can’t have it because they don’t have enough money.”

Syeda Amna Hassan, Summer Intern from Beaconhouse School System

LOOKING FORWARD



“I am so glad my father sent me to school, in spite of all the resistance he encountered. But times have changed now, and people want to send their children to school. Being educated has helped me, and now that there is a school in Talwara, I want to help others.

Adeela Ali, ABNI teacher, Talwara

At present, more than 1400 students are benefiting from ABNI schools in different localities around Lahore. The children who attend the ABNI schools in the underserved areas of Lahore are provided free education,

books and medical care. However, because of a shortage of funding, there is still much room for improvement. It is a constant struggle to provide quality education to all the children in need. As more money becomes available, it will be used to:

- Reach out to more students
- Provide needed educational facilities, such as a computer lab and a library
- Improve the quality of teaching by investing in teacher-training programs
- Improve the infrastructure of the schools so that the students have a better environment in which to excel
- Provide scholarships to aspiring students so that they can continue to pursue their education and develop their careers at accredited colleges and universities

The support offered by Global Giving will help us not only in sustaining our current service to the community, but also in expanding and improving our services.

There has been a noticeable change in the attitude of people in the communities where we have programs. 60% of community members are now voluntarily sending their children to school because they believe it is important for their children to receive an education. It is gratifying to see community support for our programs increase as the success of our work begins to beneficially impact the communities. Your support will help us do more.