

## **Objectives:**

The study of the Save the Children schools in Balochistan Afghan Refugee Villages has two broad objectives:

- Investigate and report on the quality of learning, teaching, and training in the SC/US schools in primary grades and the inter-relationship between them in terms of the classroom practice and student learning.
- Make recommendations for improving the quality of student learning in the SC/US schools.

## **Scope of the Study**

The study is directed toward grade 3 students. This is the same grade that was selected for the EFA learning outcomes study. Grade 3 is the final grade for many children in the refugee villages.

## **Methodology of the Study**

The study has two components, a quantitative assessment of student learning and a qualitative assessment of classroom practices. The methodologies are interrelated but distinct in structure and purpose.

## ***Methodology: Quantitative Assessment.***

### **Background:**

**Objective:** The quantitative assessment has a general objective and several sub-objectives. The general objective is: To assess learning achievement in terms of the Basic Competencies in Math and Pashto in Refugee Village and Home-based Girl's Schools. The sub-objectives are:

- To establish a baseline for assessing future improvements in student achievement once the Basic Competency materials are fully introduced.
- To determine the extent to which the Basic Competencies of Learning are currently being achieved by students in the refugee villages.
- To identify specific areas of the basic competencies where learning outcomes are weak, so as to better direct program resources, training, and materials toward addressing those weaknesses.

Within these objectives, several research questions are addressed:

- Is student achievement different for boys and girls?
- Is student learning significantly different in different types of schools (home based girls schools, girls only RV schools, mixed or boys RV schools)?
- Does teacher educational background, professional qualifications, or other characteristics significantly affect student learning?

- Do student characteristics such as age, gender, and mother language affect learning?
- Are any significant differences in learning achievement found in different refugee camps?

**Description of the Test:** The quantitative study uses an examination to assess learning achievement in Math and Pashto for third grade students in Afghan refugee camps.

*Characteristics of the Tests:*

- The questions on both the Math and Pashto tests were developed by Afghan educators working on the SC/US project. All of the questions are based on the Basic Competency areas for those subjects at the third grade level.
- The Math test includes 33 test items, measuring the following BCL concepts at varying levels of difficulty: place values; addition and subtraction; division and multiplication; measurement; time measurement; fractions; and geometry (basic shapes).
- The Pashto test includes 36 test items assessing the following BCL concepts at varying levels of difficulty: synonyms; antonyms; vocabulary; comprehension; spelling; writing (at word, sentence, and paragraph levels); and grammar (singular/plural, masculine/feminine, punctuation).
- The tests are completion, calculation, and true/false questions rather than multiple choice.
- Two versions of each test were developed in order to minimize copying by the students. This is a common practice in the schools.
- The tests cover all categories of Basic Competencies for each subject, but not necessarily all of the specific elements within each area of competency.
- The test questions are linked in general terms to the content or sequence of the GTZ textbooks used in the classes, but could not be considered to be directly based on the textbooks. The Basic Competency approach and description has been introduced to teachers but the supplementary materials have not yet been completed or introduced in the classroom. Therefore, this test is not an assessment of the effectiveness of those materials or of the BCL approach. Rather, this test can be considered a “pre-intervention” assessment of learning achievement in the competency areas using existing materials (i.e. GTZ textbooks.)
- The tests were piloted in five classrooms in an RV-mixed school, with three girls and two boys sections. Test questions, instructions, and procedures were adapted based on the pilot test.

*Characteristics of the Sample:* The sample consists of 57 sections of third grade classes from six refugee camps in Balochistan. The sample is broadly representative of the school population, although not exactly due to both purposive and logistic constraints. The overall population of third grade students in refugee camps changes frequently, as students and teachers are repatriated, drop out, are consolidated, or are new arrivals. In the May assessment, the system

consisted of 52 HBGS with 1032 students and 2,764 students in refugee village schools (including girls-only, boys only, and mixed). The students tested in the sample included over one-third of the total, with the following characteristics:

- 1256 students were tested. This relatively large sample, representing over one-third of the total students enrolled in the schools, is more than adequate to provide a valid assessment of student achievement to be used as a baseline. In the future, when BCL standards are used for system-wide mid-term and end of year tests, the entire population will be tested.
- The sample includes schools from six refugee camps: Lorelai; Surkhab; Saranan (and Pir Alizai); Muslim Bagh; Md. Khail; and Chagai. The percentages from each area are shown in the following graphs. In geographical terms, Chagai and Surkhab are underweighted and the others somewhat overweighted. These proportions, and the differences among the camps, were not considered problematical by the program staff.
- 25% of the sections are in home-based girls schools; 11% are in RV Girls only schools; and 64% from RV Mixed Schools. The Girls-only RV schools are somewhat over-weighted in the sample for two reasons. First, this is considered one of the three important categories of school that might affect outcome, and second that overweighting was necessary in order to get a sufficient sample.
- The proportion of students tested in the sample is different than the proportions of the sections discussed above. This is primarily because the sections in home-based girls schools and girls only classes are usually smaller than those in mixed schools. In terms of student numbers in the sample, 16.8% were in home-based girls schools, 14.6% were in RV Girls-only schools, and 68.6% were in RV Mixed Schools.
- In the sample, 43.2% of the tested students are boys and 56.8% of the tested students are girls. In overall terms, this represents a slight overweighting of girls in the population. However, as two of the three types of schools have only girls enrolled, this was considered appropriate.
- 56.8% of the sections are morning sessions, and 43.2% are afternoon sessions.
- The final determination of the sample was heavily influenced by logistical considerations. The HBGS and Girls-only RV schools were only visited by women supervisors, who required separate transportation and lodging facilities. The distance to Chagai and limitations on personnel and transportation limited the number of schools that could be included. The time available was also a factor in the final determination of the sample, as all tests had to be administered, corrected, coded, and entered in a two week period.

### *Characteristics of the Teacher Questionnaire:*

The teacher questionnaire collected basic demographic and educational information about the teachers, including age, gender, native language, educational level, teacher training received, and years of experience in teaching. The questionnaire also collected school specific information, including the number of hours each week spent on Pashto and math, whether the teacher teaches a double shift, the number of supervisor visits in the past two months and their purpose, and the last lesson completed in Pashto and math. The English version of the teacher questionnaire is included in the Appendices.

**Aspects of the Study that Affect Interpretation of Results.** The study, with both the quantitative and qualitative aspects, was conducted on a scale and schedule that reflects a range of considerations. It is not structured to be nor is it intended to be a definitive assessment of the factors of success for Afghan refugee village schools.

- the findings of this study can be considered a “pre-test” assessment for the BCL intervention. To date, none of the BCL supplementary materials have been distributed or utilized in the classroom. The concept of BCL has been introduced to teachers, but not yet implemented as a guiding force in classroom management.
- The format of the test was different than the students were accustomed to, which may result in the test scores being somewhat lower than the students’ actual competency. However, the fact that a significant number of students scored perfect or near perfect grades indicates that neither the format nor the difficulty of the questions is an insuperable problem. One would expect that students will do somewhat better in future tests as they become used to the approach.
- The scheduling of the study was determined by programmatic and contractual factors and does not fully correspond to the school year. Students were tested in late September-early October, which is approximately two months before the end of the school year. Some teachers had not yet completed the teaching plan for the year, while others were already working on review. The tests in some classes reflect this, as many students had not yet studied the later material.
- The tests in Chagai camp were conducted on fourth grade students rather than third grade students. This region has a different school calendar due to the weather and had just started the new school year at the time of the study. Therefore, the students who had completed third grade the previous June were tested for the baseline.
- The results will be used to identify areas of strength and weakness in the current teaching, relative to the basic competencies. This can be used to orient teacher training and materials development in the future.
- The results will identify specific competencies where students are having trouble.
- The testing can establish a format and standard for annual assessment of student achievement. Future progress can be measured against this baseline.