Whose Public Action?
Analysing Inter-sectoral Collaboration for Service Delivery

Pakistan Education Case Study
Idara-Taleem-o-Aagahi's partnerships with the Ministry of Education

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1. Introduction

This report attempts to provide an understanding of the evolution and nature of the relationship between ITA and the Ministry of Education to improve access and quality of education provision in the state schooling system. The report attempts to identify the key factors shaping the relationship and whether and how the relationship has influenced the working or agendas of the participating organisations over time.

1.1. Methodology

The information and analysis provided in this report is based on documentary evidence, in-depth interviews with staff within the NSP and the relevant government agencies and the observation of the realities witnessed during the fieldwork conducted with the NSP and the relevant state agencies during November 2006 to September 2007. The report also draws upon analysis of the evolution of the state-NSP relationship in Pakistan and the programme analysis for each sector conducted during stage 2 of this research project. Drawing on those reports was important to identify the over all conditioning factors shaping the relationship under study.

In developing an account of the conditioning factors the report draws upon government policy documents, Five Year Development Plans, interviews with prominent civil society members who have seen the NSPs evolve, academics, and senior officials within the ministry of education, health, and social welfare. The analysis also drew upon the country strategy plans of the multilateral and bilateral donors based in Islamabad to understand their role in the evolution of state and NSP relations in Pakistan. Most of these interviews were conducted during stage 2 of the research project. At the first stage of the fieldwork, the obvious players within each sector were identified. These in particular included the government, the leading NGOs working within education, health, and water and sanitation, and international donor community. Interviews were initially conducted with the main focal point/ ministry spokesmen within each ministry to help identify those government programmes within which there are some obvious relationships with the NSPs. These exploratory interviews were followed up with in-depth interviews with the heads or senior officials of the relevant programmes. Interviews were also conducted with many NSP providers in all the three sectors especially those, which are involved in some form of relationship with the state in service provision. Some big NSPs, with a national or regional presence, which were not involved in a relationship with the state, were also interviewed to get a critical perspective on the partnership programmes. At the same time, interviews were conducted with sector specialists in leading development agencies, including the multilateral and bilateral organizations like the World Bank and DFID.

This was in recognition of the fact that the government development plans and sector strategy papers, as well as initial interviews with the government and non-profit providers, made it clear very early on that the international donor agencies were often key players behind initiation of many of these partnerships. The

international literature on partnerships had also suggested the likelihood of finding a strong donor influence on the– 'partnerships' being a key objective of the millennium development goals. Reports of independent research think-tanks on each of the three sectors were also consulted. Where possible, a few seminars and conferences on the related subjected were attended. For example, the Second South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN) provided a valuable opportunity to identify the programmes within water and sanitation and to verify the information gathered from different sources. Similarly, a workshop organised by an INGO in Islamabad with leading education NGOs from across the country was utilised to help identify the various types of relationships/programmes that exist among them and the state in the provision of education services. The country strategy plans of the bigger donors were also consulted. All these stages of the fieldwork, help identify the broader conditioning factors shaping state-NSP relations in each sector and the key programmes and prominent cases to pursue for in-depth investigation.

The next stage of the fieldwork focused specifically on the chosen case-study. During the time spent on the specific case, it was felt important to get perspective of not just the leadership of the NSP and the government departments but also those of the middle and field level staff and of any actors in the wider network who influence the relationship. Thus, in addition to the NSP leaders, staff members, and government officials, interviews were conducted with the community and the representatives of the NGO networks if they had a role in the shaping of the relationship.

1.3. Selection of ITA

Out of the four possible programme options within the education sector (State facilities to private schools; contracting of government school buildings for evening shifts; Adopt a school programme; and, government non-formal school programme implemented through NGOs) two programmes were found to be important: the adopt a school programme and non-formal education provision by NGOs. It was therefore decided to the try to pursue both the programme especially if one NSP could be found that is engaged in both the programmes. It was in this context that the ITA case became particularly attractive for this study. ITA represents one of the growing number of NSPs which have been successful in forming relationship with the government in provision of education across different programmes. ITA has been working in more than 400 government schools as part of its school improvement programme plus it is running 350 non-formal schools under different donor funded projects, where these non-formal schools are housed with government school buildings. Also, it is providing teacher training to government schoolteachers. At the same time, it is an example of an NGO that is increasingly trying to get is resources by becoming a service provider to the Ministry of Education.

This multi-layered interaction between the state and big education NGOs is increasingly growing in Pakistan. In case of ITA, these multiple level of

interactions include: using state building to run its non-formal school; providing training to government staff, undertaking school improvement programmes within government schools; and, finally influencing the government policy and planning within primary education. Given the focus of this research project, the case provided a good opportunity to understand the reasons for this enhanced interaction between the state and some bigger NGOs, and what is the nature of this relationship, i.e., whose agenda is most dominant. This will be particularly interesting given that the interviews with the government officials show that many government officials at senior as well as field level do not have good image of NGOs yet they are at the same time entering into more and more partnerships with them.

As opposed to this multi-tiered partnership between the state and an NSP, other possible case studies seemed less attractive. For example, the government run non-formal programme operates under a specified contract in which there is not much scope for contention; the NGO agreeing to work within the framework agree to the programme before joining and those not willing to abide by the rules don't engage at all. Thus they hardly represent examples of a complex case. The NGOs which stay away from this programme and run their own non-formal schools with donor funds have to interact with the government only at the time of making their children take fifth grade exam and it seems that process has traditionally been quite smooth though there seems to be some changes in regulations this year which can make the process more difficult for NGOs. Against these other options, ITA seemed a more complex and interesting case to study.

2. Organizational profile, vision and conditioning factors

2.1 The organization today

ITA is a non-governmental organization registered as a trust. The head office is in Lahore with a regional office in Islamabad and district level offices in: Kasur, Sheikupura, Muzafarabad, Bagh, Chinniot, plus the Lahore district. The district offices report to the head office in Lahore. It also has fund raising offices in UK and USA.

The main focus of ITA's work is the Whole School Improvement Programme. Under this programme, ITA involves with the government schools for two to three year duration during which time it attempts to improve the physical infrastructure within the schools and improve the teaching through arranging teacher training modules. The programme also focuses on training of school managers. ITA has been quite successful in negotiating permission with the relevant state authorities to work in the government schools in the six districts where it operates.

In addition to the Whole School Improvement Programme, ITA runs many other projects. Within non-formal education, ITA is running over 350 schools often held in government school buildings in the evening. These are being run under different donor funded projects. For example, ITA is currently involved in an ILO project aimed to provide non-formal education and skill training to children involved in child labour in Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad. It aims to impart primary education for those children in transition from non-formal to formal; life skills and health education for all learners; and functional literacy for older children (reading, writing, maths, use of computer, visits to bank, health facilities, NIC, etc.).

It is also involved in Early Childhood Education and is implementing a Pakistani Teachers' Project funded by US Congressional Grant where Pakistani educators receive training for five weeks in the summer at Plymouth State University, USA. The programme aims to build mutual understanding between the US and Pakistan through such cross-cultural education linkages and helps secondary level Pakistani public school teachers and education managers to enhance their subject knowledge, pedagogical skills and disposition towards news ways of teaching areas as Science, Math and educational leadership. The organization continuously keeps exploring news concepts and ideas. Most recently it has also developed a partnership with Punjab Education Foundation to launch a school voucher programme in private schools.

Advocacy to reform educational policies with Pakistan is an integral part of ITA's work. This advocacy takes places through hosting of seminars, conferences, research reports as well as through cultivating one to one links with relevant government officials. ITA has also established a South Asia level alliance of education NGOs.

The organization was only established in 1998 but its fast success in cultivating links with the government agencies can be seen in the access it got to government facilities in the Azad Kashmir area after it was hit by the devastating earthquake on 8 October 2005. The Department of Education in AJK engaged ITA for education sector reform in two districts: Muzaffarabad and Bagh Districts. The AJK government sent a notification to District Education Officers in both the districts on 1 April, 2006:

"We recommend that the (ITA's) sports kits, other related activities to be given due attention in the timetable and full cooperation is extended to ITA field teams and trainers to rehabilitate our schools".

This work has included: conducting school surveys to assess needs, establishment of School Management Committees, provide training to teachers, head teachers, in pedagogy, content and leadership, helping the district government in district level planning and establishing a program of non-formal, literacy and livelihoods. In addition, ITA is also setting up an Institute for Quality Assurance and Training (IQAT) in AJK through public private partnership for outreach to government and non-elite private schools.

ITA has thus managed to develop multiple educational programmes though keeping the main focus on School Improvement Programme and has tried to engage with the government in most of these programmes. The biggest programme that ITA has been involved with so far was a donor funded project in Kasur and Sheikhupura where it partnered with Sudhaar (another NGO) to reduce drop out by improving school facilities and increase literacy through non-formal schools, which is now drawing to a close. Some of these partnerships require engagement with government officials at the provincial level, while much of its advocacy work is aimed at federal government. Thus, the partnership operates at all three tiers of the government for different projects (See Figure 1 for the points of contact between ITA and the relevant government authorities).

2.2 The model & points of interaction

Given that the Whole School Improvement Programme (WSIP) is the central programme for ITA and is integral to its very philosophy, the model followed is explained in some detail here. Also, out of all its programmes, this one demands most intensive interaction between the ITA and government authorities for the entire period of the partnership. It is therefore important to understand this programme to know the main points of active contact between ITA and officials of the Ministry of Education.

The focus of the Whole School Improvement Programme is on revitalizing under performing public schools through public-private partnerships with a vision of 'Regenerating schools-regenerating communities.' The idea is to encourage specific linkages between the public and private sector to transform 'dysfunctional government schools into viable, self sustained, and quality driven education sites.' The model constitutes of a four phased process:

Phase 1: In the first phase, ITA identifies the schools that require attention and getting an orientation about them. From this very step direct contact starts with the officials within the Ministry of Education. ITA has to obtain a list of potential schools for partnership from the government school directorate; explain to the officials the purpose of the project; and arrange with the department officials a joint introductory and observational visit to potential schools. This visit is followed by a detailed visit to fill out the Needs Assessment Form with the help of the Head teacher and staff of the school.

Phase 2: The second phase starts with signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education about adopting the chosen school. An integral part of the initial work is to hold sessions with teachers and students on Hopes, Fears, Expectations and Desires about the partnership. At the same time, during this phase a survey of the community is conducted to identify partners within the community. This is followed by formation of a School Management Committee/ School Council. One nominee from the Department of Education is required to attend the monthly meeting of the Council.

Phase 3: In the third phase a School Development Plan is finalized with input from all the staff and the School Management Committee members. The Plan implementation begins and is monitored on regular basis.

Phase 4: The final phase consists of developing an exit strategy for ITA over a period of 2-3 years. In this respect efforts are made to get enhanced resource mobilization from regular Department of Education budget, making the government regularize any extra teachers appointed by ITA as part of its School Development Plan, and introducing income generation activity at the school.

The positive response to the model led ITA to launch a School Improvement Network Pakistan (SINP) in 2001. SINP believes that working as a network of partnership adds value to the work of each organization involved. The platform aims to facilitate effective exchange of information and skills on school improvement.

As is clear, the Whole School Improvement Programme required ITA to build relationships with government officials at the district government level as well as with the government employed teachers and head teachers working within the government schools. Plus, ITA's other projects and advocacy role makes contact at federal and provincial government level equally important. Thus, developing links with all three tiers of the Ministry of Education (federal government officials in Islamabad, provincial government officials in Lahore, and district government officials within the districts) is very important for the working of ITA.

2.3 The government structure

Pakistan has a federal style of government. The federal government compromises several ministries and divisions, each one of which is headed by a secretary who, in turn, is responsible to the federal minister. The ministers form the federal cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister. A similar pattern exists at the provincial level. A large number of federal ministries have their counterparts in the provinces, which are known as departments. This civil administration represents the continuation of the structures established under the colonial administrative system.

In 2001, the government of General Musharraf, which was a result of a coup staged in 1999 ousting the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, promulgated the Local Government Ordinance, whereby a three tiered system comprising districts, tehsils, and unions was formed. Each tier of local government has its elected council and administration, and is headed by an elected Nazim. Thus, the District Government has up to twelve administrative departments, a council and is headed by the District Nazim. Under the new system, administrations are accountable to elected councils and ultimately to the electorate.

The purpose of the system is in conception to take decision-making closer to the people. It ensures that planning and development are carried out in accordance

with local needs. It encouraged community participation in governance. While prior to devolution, it was the provincial government, which was mainly responsible for actual provision of services, not it is the district government. As stated in the Provincial Local Government Ordinance 2001 and reflected in the Education Sector Reforms Action Plan 2001-2—5, the district rather than the province has become the operational tier of governance and the focus of all development activity.

According to the Constitution, education in Pakistan is a provincial subject. However, the administration of public education in the country is partly centralized, with the Federal Ministry of Education responsible not only for the development of policy statements and national plans and budgets but also for the overall curriculum development and standard of education. The policy, planning and coordination of major components of Education for All, i.e., Non-formal Primary Education, Adult Literacy and Early Childhood Education is the responsibility of the Planning Wing of the Ministry of Education, whereas the implementing agencies are the Provincial Education Departments, District Government and NGOs. Learning achievement and training in essential skills (curricula, examination, evaluation, standard of education, learning, teacher training) are under the purview of the Curriculum Wing of Ministry of Education and the provincial line departments/organizations. Special Education and Social Welfare Division manages the education for the special persons/handicapped and children with special needs.

The provincial Education Departments are headed by their respective Provincial Education Ministers. The civil servant in change of the department is the Provincial Education Secretary. The provinces are further divided into districts for the purpose of administration. The head of the Education Department in a district is Executive District Officer (EDO) Education and head of the Literacy Department (in case of Punjab and Sindh only) is Executive District Literacy (EDO Literacy).

2.4 How it got there: the conditioning factors

2.4.1 Conditioning factors for the state
The working of the various tiers of the Ministry of Education is constrained by numerous factors. The state infrastructure in terms of offices, vehicles and running costs for fieldtrips is much bleaker than what is available to ITA staff especially at the lower ranks. The overall incentive structure to deliver the goals is thus much more conducive for the NSP as opposed to the state agencies. The feudal elite, which sits in the parliament, is often resistant to spread of education in the rural areas. Also, the teaching positions within schools are seen as a good way of distributing political patronage. Currently, the military government has set in different dynamics with an ex-general leading the ministry of education and many ex-military officials sitting on important positions within the ministry. As visible in interviews with some of the senior education bureaucrats, this blocks promotions

of many of these bureaucrats leading to demoralisation and also frustration with having to deal with non-technical people as their supervisors.

This sense of difference is reflected in interview with the Mohammad Rafiq Wariq, District Officer, Social Welfare, Sheikupura: 'The office is supposed to have 7 positions but they haven't been able to recruit due to a ban on recruitment....... The District Office is keen to work with NGOs. Government doesn't have the resources – for example, there is a computer with no printer so letters have to be handwritten.'

Further, it is important to understand the conditioning factors that led to devolution as they have relevance to opening up of space for ITA and other NGOs to work with the district government— the level at which ITA has most extensive partnerships. The government claims it to be sign of its commitment to genuine reform and establishing an accountable system of governance. The motive of the state are, however, much more complex and need to be recorded as they then influence the functioning and achievements of the district governments. The first important point is that all military governments in Pakistan have sought legitimacy by attempting to establish local government but they have not had the intention to actually devolve power. Thus, despite the devolution, the power remains concentrated at the centre. In 1959 Field Marshall Ayub Khan passed the Basic Democracies Order for Local Government reforms, devolving representation to the village level; in 1979, Zia ul Haq promulgated the Local Government Ordinance to activate local governments.

The current devolution programme has been viewed by many as a means to win international legitimacy for the military regime of General Musharraf as donor agencies operating in Pakistan were now emphasising the need for devolution, a trend being followed internationally. Decentralization was seen critical to the macro-level reforms including poverty reduction strategy and all the donor agencies invested heavily into and thereby developed high stakes in ensuring its success. The active involvement of donor agencies with the devolution plan meant that the NGOs in turn came to have great influence and stakes in devolution process as senior NGO leaders were appointed as experts for designing devolution plans and were also given large contracts to train the district government manpower and also to deliver projects at the district level in association with the local government officials. Thus, the current government structure for delivery of education, where the emphasis is at the district government for actual service delivery, has been heavily influenced by the donor agencies and the larger NGOs, thereby giving them better access to the system.

2.4.2 Conditioning factors for ITA

The following factors have played important role in the shaping of ITA.

State restructuring and rise of opportunities

The evolution of ITA, and its specific focus, has to be seen in the context of the larger role given to prominent NGO leaders in designing the local government reform programme in Pakistan. Dr Baela Jameel, a well-known educationist in Pakistan with experience of working with UNESCO internationally, set up ITA in 1998 with a group of like-minded friends and family members. The organization was formally registered in 2000. Baela had worked at important positions with UNESCO, Sindh Education Foundation, and in 1999 was appointed as the Advisor to the Federal Minister for Education, Ms Zobaida Jalal, a position that Baela retained for over three years. Her ideas about the NSP interventions within state education system are thus based on her experience of work with UNESCO in international positions, with the provincial and district government through her time at Sindh Education Foundation and her time as an advisor to the federal Minister for Education, which gave her a lot of insight into the working of the government. Not to forget that her PhD was also in education studies. Since she was taking an active part in the Education Sector Reform Plan, which was in turn closely tied to the devolution plan, she played a critical role in the introduction of the notion of Public Private Partnerships within the education sector. The birth of ITA and its clear focus on working with the government was thus clearly an extension of her belief that such partnerships can be effective but also a result of the opportunities she saw arising for NGOs to intervene with the state, now that she herself was among the NGO leaders designing the government reform agenda.

Resourcefulness of the leader (Networks)
The fact that the leader of ITA, Baela, has been resourceful at the time of the origin and expansion of the organization has been critical in shaping it. Though in the first year, the ITA team as a principle did not accept any funds, by the second year, they were receiving large donor projects involving service delivery of education in collaboration with the state. ITA also got involved in many government led education projects with a component for community participation. In winning this projects and grants, Baela's credibility within both the donor and government networks clearly had a part.

Interests within the organisation
For Baela herself the work at ITA is not her source of income as according to her she does not draw a salary from ITA. But, the picture is slightly complicated. ITA set up gives her a whole establishment (car, offices, staff) at her disposal to do the work she wants. This work gets her the clout and presence within Pakistan's education sector, which gets her donor consultancies, and paid advisory roles within donor and government projects. These aspirations of the leader of the organisation have influence in the shaping of the organisation as due to the desire to retain important stature within development agencies and the government, ITA has been open to all kind of partnership and engagements without maintaining any clear ideological positions unlike OPP. For example, on one hand it engages with strengthening state education facilities while on the other it is implementing a major programme of voucher scheme for private schools.

Organisational philosophy and staffing

The organization is also influenced by the nature of its staff. ITA's leadership represents the upper income class of Pakistan, while most of the staff comes from middle-income groups. The staff provides a nice gender balance as visible in the visits to ITA offices. At the district level, the emphasis is on recruiting locally so that the staff are familiar with the local setting and have some contacts. The staff is all recruited on basis of competence and not on their ideological commitment to certain ideas. So, the incentives for both the leadership and the staff members are mainly to have good exciting projects with clear targets and good infrastructure to deliver those projects. The staff of ITA is motivated by good leadership, training opportunities, and ability to move to better careers. The employees get a good pay, a good working environment, and good training opportunities (including opportunity for foreign travel). Thus, it is an organisation which constitutes of development professionals, which work with it because they believe in over all cause of development and reaching the poor, but not are necessarily motivated by a specific ideological philosophy of empowerment.

The staff seemed generally motivated and positive about ITA, about the leadership and about their work. Interviews with senior and junior staff show that Baela's leadership is one of the key inspiration factors for most of the staff. There are two sides to her leadership. One, there is opportunity to learn from her which most of the staff seems to value a lot. At same time her leadership is important as she is seen to be well-connected and working with her looks good on the CV and a good reference from her can promise positions with higher salaries in other development organisations. Other incentives mentioned by the staff members included decent pay for the work, good infrastructure to do the work, and interesting projects. As the head of ITA Kasur district office highlighted, he learns from her. In addition, working for ITA gives the possibility of promotion prospects both within ITA and outside. He knows Baela would be a good person to have as a reference for other jobs. Similarly, Mr Saeed, Coordinator School Improvement Programme, added: 'As for my own motivation for working with ITA, I feel ITA provides a very good working environment and Baela is an inspirational leader. There is this feeling that you are making a difference. Also, working with Baela provides you a very good learning opportunity, which can help towards career development and better job opportunities.'

According to Baela, "The way we motivate the staff is by providing them the opportunity to learn. There are few girls who have come to us who don't even want money but want to learn. ITA gives a great sense of learning. Also, there is no sense of hierarchy. Everyone gets the same level of respect. I am a furious manager but people stay despite that. We don't give much salary. Our manager's salaries are between Rs 17000- 30,000. However, we have taken approval from our Board of Directors that we get additional projects assigned to the same staff then we top up their salaries too. Also, we give our staff maximum opportunity for travel. If there is an invitation for participation in an international conference/workshop, we don't avail it ourselves; we give it to our staff." Thus, the organisation is quite egalitarian and participatory in its method of work whereby the staff feel an ownership of the organisation as well as the projects.

Finances

ITA claims to be relying mainly on donations from expatriate Pakistanis. Even in terms of the actual figures ITA has provided the emphasis remains on philanthropic contributions (see data below provided by ITA's accounts division).

Account details

Receipts for 2005 & 2006

	2006 (Rs)	2005 (Rs)
Project Receipts:		
ILO	6,661,047	
Save the Children, UK		11,194,472
UNICEF	16,941,570	
Donations*	22,288,348	8,655,116
Profit on Bank deposits	15,484	9,191
Profit on sale of fixed assets	5,496	119,000
Computer course fee	33,050	75,770
Exchange gain on currency Fluctuations	36,195	60,923
Miscellaneous		1,250
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	57,175,662	8,921,250

Donations:
    ICI Pakistan
    Nestle
    UNILEVER
    Punjab Education Foundation
    ITACEC UK
    Philanthropists
    Plymouth State University UK
    UNESCO

Percentage contribution by type of donor for 2005-2006

Donations:	Rs. 22,288,348
Philanthropists	58.92 %

UNICEF (other projects)	5.51 %
UNESCO	1.06 %
Punjab Education Foundation	0.44 %
Plymouth State University	9.26 %
Nestle Pakistan Limited	13 %
ICI Pakistan	4.47 %
Other	7.33 %

However, these details do not match what is visible in the offices and projects sites and also the percentage breakdown provided does not include many of the donor agencies, which are mentioned on ITA's various brochures. All the projects that ITA made us visit (school improvement, Sudhaar-ITA Alliance project, non-formal school projects) were funded by some donor agency, government or a corporate donor. Some of the donors listed in various brochures are: Save the Children UK, Friends of ITA from UK, Education Trust, Plymouth State University, Japan Asian Friendship, Catholic Relief Services, UNESCO, UNICEF, etc. Its biggest project so far, which has been a joint project with Sudhaar, was funded by US Department of Labour. Another major project for training teachers in the US is funded by the University of Plymouth. It is thus difficult to take their financial data seriously. I think rather than using the data above, we can just draw on the point that ITA draws funds from multiple donors. Its main corporate donors include: Unilever, Nestle, ICI, and LCCI. The consequence of this policy of taking funding from almost any source is that the organization lacks an ideological clarity in its vision and purpose.

According to Baela, the organization initially drew on investment of its own members but now it attracting large amounts of funds from development agencies. Baela explains, "For the first one and half year we took no money from any donor agencies because we felt that we should have the courage to take the risk and invest our own resources in pursuing our ideals. If they work then we will take resources to expand but we don't have to start with the mentality of a begging bowl, which is heavily prevalent among the NGOs. Now we are doing projects with many development agencies."

Community participation
The community is important to ITA in delivery its projects but in terms of shaping the organisation itself or its philosophy. In its key areas of intervention, ITA has clearly mobilised the community members through its fieldworkers. The community is mobilised primary to send their children to school and secondly to make them monitor the facilities they are providing within the government school

system. However, the community is not involved in designing the intervention in development of the MOUs. In fact, Baela is a bit apprehensive of too much emphasis on community participation within the development sector. She feels that the community participation is over exaggerated: 'I feel that we need to come out of this myth of community participation. In our experience, the community is also not very cooperative and forthcoming. Often the space provided for the school is very small and dull. Also, very soon community members start making demands. We therefore have always been keen to establish our non-formal schools in the government school buildings. This way our children also get to benefit from a proper school building. This also improves their self-esteem. At the same time, any investment that we make in improving the school facilities also benefit the government school children coming in the morning shift.'

2.5 What ITA proposes to do: its vision of public action

ITA's vision of the public action is very board, due to causes discussed above, thus making it difficult to pin it. Its aim is to "actively pursue standard setting in education as a comprehensive multidimensional learning experience for human evolution and consciousness." In terms of vision of public action, the emphasis seems to be on mobilising participation at all levels. The approach is to mobilise all kind of donors, government, philanthropists, communities, etc. to meet the educational challenge in the country. The vision seem to be that anyone who can contribute anything towards improving education standards in Pakistan should be involved in improving the system and ITA aims to attack as a platform to synergise the energies of these diverse actors. It is no surprise then that in terms of its activities, it is engaged with all kind of actors and in all kind of education programmes: government, donors agencies, expatriate Pakistani, local philanthropists, NGO alliances, etc. (see figure 2).

Also, in terms of approaches to education, its vision involves engaging with all kind of education methods and techniques to optimise the resources to provide education to all rather than choosing a specific path over the other. Baela explained in one of the interviews about how she draws on both formal and non-formal system of education: "Our vision is that basic education is really a continuum where formal and non-formal are not opposed to each other but form a continuum. We feel both are government responsibility and our role should be to support the government rather than rival it. I have long been arguing for challenging the whole concept of non-formal. I feel it is a very western classification, which has been imposed on our system of education. We do not have such rigid divides. However, the term is prevailing because there are a lot of groups with vested interests in non-formal education. What we are now doing is to argue with the government to remove this distinction between formal and non-formal and to make the budgets between the two transferable. Currently, there are separate budgets for the formal and non-formal schooling system, which means that funds are often wasted even if they can be used in the non-formal schools, as the budgets are non-transferable. I have been briefing the secretary education, Punjab Government to table this policy paper."

Finally, in terms of the role that ITA envisages for itself as a public actor, there is no ideological position. ITA is willing to put in resources into government schools and invest voluntarily in improving the state schooling system. Yet, at the same time one of its key activities is to take on consultancy projects and contracts from the government where it is paid by the government to undertake certain activities for the government be it related to training of government staff or running of non-formal schools. Here the government becomes "ITA's client". Thus, its vision of public action involves treating the state system as a recipient of aid yet also drawing resources from it for its own survival where the government is tendering NSPs input for specific projects. This leads to a dual set of relations with the government: in case of school improvement programme and non-formal schools it is leading the relationship but in the service delivery contracts that it wins from the government, the government lays down the guidelines and controls the budget strings and comes with the expectations of a client (i.e., to be catered to), and ITA treats it as a client trying to meet its demands.

To draw on Baela again: "My future vision is to see ITA as a national and regional player within education at all levels. We will like to see our work and research recognized as legitimate knowledge. We want to be key players in shaping the South Asia Education Forum. We want to see ourselves as key players in education reforms and implementation. In the longer term, I want ITA to lead a new movement in education learning and theory. I want to shift the knowledge generation for education to the third world given that much more exciting work is happening at our end."

ITA's vision of public action thus seems to be very expanded including all actors, all methods and all types of roles for itself to get to the target of improving access as well as quality of education in Pakistan. The consequence is that there is little evidence of it addressing the education needs of its target communities in a sustainable way— a complaint raised by most government officials in Kasur and Sheikupura where the project is drawing to an end (an issue address in the section on relationship in practice).

Government: In Pakistan, provision of primary education is supposed to be state's responsibility. The constitution of the country promises access to free primary education to all. However, the state of education remains bleak with literacy rate being 55% and the state schooling system facing problems of access as well as quality. From the government side, there thus seems to an acceptance that public contributions both monetary and technical are essential for the meeting the education for all targets. There is a feeling that the challenge is too big for the government to meet on its own. But, underlying this willingness to accommodate the private sector is the emphasis on their monetary contributions. Thus while the state funds the government schools and the whole monitoring structure, it mainly enters in partnership with NSPs in those fields where the latter can bring in some material resources. The vision of public action for the state is thus that the NSPs should mobilise additional resources to help the state deliver its objectives.

However, in recent years, there is also a shift towards recognising the technical expertise of some of the leading NSPs within education and engaging them as paid consultants to train the government teachers or staff of the Ministry of Education.

3. The Partnership: Nature and Conditioning Factors

3.1 Nature of the partnership

As described in the section on organization today, ITA maintains partnerships with the state at multiple levels and in different types of projects ranging from adopt a school to non-formal education. Across these partnerships, ITA is normally responsible for all the financial and technical contributions and the government is normally required to allow access to the government schools, training of government school teachers, allow use of government school buildings for ITA's non-formal schools, and where possible attempt to take over ITA paid teachers and their literacy schools. At the same time, ITA keeps taking on service delivery role for the government where it is paid to carry out the service under a contract from the government. The question is that what factors have conditioned such a distribution of responsibilities in the state-ITA partnerships. It is also important to understand why the space for such a partnership has evolved within Pakistan in the current period.

3.2 Emphasis on partnerships

Apart from the Bhutto socialist era when a large number of NSP schools were nationalized, the state has generally encouraged the involvement of the private sector in the provision of education. However, the current emphasis on PPP is a new push, and international development agencies have played a role in this. From the beginning, there has been a provision for the state to give land to NSPs to set up schools and madrasas. A closer analysis of the country's five year development plans, however, shows that it is really in the late 1970s and early 1980s that more conscious efforts were made to involve NSPs within education provision and much of this was done under the banner of literacy programmes. The attempts to formally engage NGOs/CBOs in implementation of state education programmes did not start till 1980s, and was put into practice in a noticeable way only under the Social Action Programme (SAP) in the 1990s. Since then the emphasis on participation has continued to grow and under the current government which was installed in 1999 after a military coup, 'public-private partnership' has become a critical component of the reform agenda (GoP 2002).

There is also currently a lot of emphasis in government documents on 'partnership' between state and non-state providers in all the three service sectors. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which is the key policy document feeding into sector strategies for each of the three sectors, notes public-private partnerships as one of the six fundamental principles of the reform strategy: "it (PRSP) is public-private partnership oriented," (GoP 2003). The state has explicitly adopted the language of

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'Public-Private Partnership': the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper as well as sector reform plans explicitly use this term (GoP 2003). The NSPs, for-profit as well as not-for-profit, are being seen as key partners in PPP. The emphasis on PPP runs across the three sectors. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) maintains:

"Recognizing immense contribution of the private sector and NGOs in the social sectors, the ESR is anchored in development of partnerships between the private sector, civil society organisations, and the public sector. Public-private partnerships are critical to reaching the goals of access and quality at all levels of education creating possibilities for both voice and choice and improved service delivery" (p. 70, GoP 2003).

3.3 Conditioning factors for the state

For the government, the stated motive to enter the partnerships is that the state is not capable of meeting the educational needs of all and that any inputs from the NSPs are to be welcomed. The motive is apparently to demonstrate its commitment to meeting education for all targets through utilizing all resources. On the government side, it is clear that the main incentive was linked to the financial contributions that ITA could bring. This was reflected in the initial MOUs developed with the government over the school improvement programmes as initially the government version of the MOU asked ITA to give money to build a wall and take care of the infrastructure rather than provide facilitation and professional support. The government did not want them to interference with their teachers especially with their hiring and firing. However, as Bina (Baela's sister and member of senior management team) highlights, "ITA didn't see its role as fixing light bulbs and letting govt off the hook" so they negotiated with the government for over six months before the first MOU was finalised and allowed ITA to play a role in actual delivery of education within the school.

Dr Fayyaz, Joint Education Advisor, Ministry of Education also raised the issue of resources in explaining the reasons for engaging with the civil society: 'We in the education ministry have long believed in it. The public-private partnership in education that is being internationally encouraged today was adopted in Pakistan from early 1980s. During the socialist government in the 1970s, the government nationalised private and voluntary schools. However, this resulted in deterioration of these schools. Therefore, from late seventies, there was a realisation that private sector and civil society has to be involved in delivery of education as the state cannot meet these objectives on its own.'

Weak capacity to mobilize the community
The other stated motive is that the Ministry of Education now recognizes the need for community participation and that the NGOs are better at community mobilization and thus need to be engaged.

Weak technical expertise

Linked to the above, the other factor for the state is lack of sufficient technical skills within the ministries to deal with latest specializations in the field. Much of the opening up within the state sector has been due to need to deal with international conferences and donor projects.

Elitist state

However, implicit within it is also a concern within some NSP actors that this could be state's way of shrugging its responsibility and reducing the pressure on the state for providing education for all targets. The reasons for doubting state motives and intentions rest mainly in the strong sense of corruption with the state system and a visible lack of commitment to education despite all the big claims. Pakistan spends less than 10 percent of its annual budget on education as opposed to over 30% on defense spending. Plus even the funds allocated are not utilized as absorption capacity is very low and in the development projects, which are implemented, corruption is very high. It is often argued that lack of resources is not the main hurdle to education problems in Pakistan, the problems rests in lack of political commitment due to feudal and military control over the state where neither group has been committed to education of the poor. Thus the commitment of the state to providing education for all is not necessarily that clear.

Donor pressure

Another motive often attributed to the state for opening up to NSPs is that this is one way of pleasing the donor community which has long been arguing for giving more space to NSPs in implementing state projects. The influence of the international development institutions is also very clear given that many of these strategy documents frame PPPs within the Millennium Development Goal No. 8 of Forming Partnerships in Development (GoP 2003). Moreover, the Musharraf government inducted leading NGO personalities as ministers and advisors within the social sector ministries at national and provincial level from the very outset. The strategy was obvious: these development practitioners gave the military regime a civilian face, which it badly needed in the initial days to win support of foreign donors and the international community in general. Either way, the familiarity of these NGO people with the donor language clearly had an impact in the drafting of the strategy papers.

This was most obvious within education where the Federal Minister for Education and one of her key advisors, came from an NGO background with a prior history of engagement with the donor community, and were highly regarded by the donor community. For example, the head of UNESCO in Pakistan wrote an article in The News, a leading national daily, appreciating the Minister's commitment to education and her understanding of the challenges. It was more than a coincidence then that the social sector policies, especially within education became increasingly a reflection of thinking of the international development institutions. This Minister, who was later removed, actively promoted the idea of privatisation of education, including primary education, and the Education Sector Reform Strategy (ESRS) prepared under her team of advisers gave great emphasis to 'public-private partnership.

Dr Fayyaz, Joint Education Advisor, a very senior bureaucrat within the Ministry of Education, was also vocal about his concerns with NGOs. His views were that donors and NGOs exercise too much power in Pakistan where they have no compulsion to include or inform the government of their activities. He said: 'The problem is that Pakistan is free for all; everyone can do what they want. In India the government regulates the international donors much more carefully. But, in Pakistan the government does not have the courage to say no.' He was of the view that without government involvement the NGOs activities wont lead to any productive change.

About NGOs involvement in state service delivery, he was equally suspect: 'Why does civil society not regulate crime and corruption rather than provide NFE? – Because there is no money in it! Look at what donors did in '79 – they gave money to madrassahs. Now Pakistan and the rest of the world is facing the music! If the govt were strong, it would say that it doesn't need their money. If we don't check civil society, we will face another Somalia. NGO voices are becoming very strong because they are not run by poor people. Why does civil society want to take on service delivery? What are their ethics?'

Mr Aly who wrote the White Paper on Education for the Ministry of Education had similar views about NGOs: 'NGOs have vested interests – big fat salaries which are way above the norm. NGOs are getting greater clout within the govt because govt is going for catchy buzzwords and slogans which they normally pick up when the rest of the world has stopped using them! For example, nationalisation started here when others started to privatise."

He further added: 'NGO is a fashionable word – supplementing state activity. In states that are not properly performing, the answer of citizens is to do what the state should be doing. This is encouraged by the West where they see governance problems so support community organisations. Donors find it convenient to operate through NGOs for understandable reasons – working with the state can be very difficult. However, there is very little accountability of NGOs, whereas the public sector has a lot of accountability which results in loss of speed. They need to improve speed but this shouldn't be at the cost of accountability.'

Mr Hamyoon, Additional Secretary, Department of Education, Government of Punjab also shared these concerns: 'The point is also that schools adopted by NGOs in cities like Lahore are not those in the more difficult areas. The NGOs keep presenting videos and pictures to donors to get money from them. But it is not so remarkable to get results in a city like Lahore– everything is available, books etc.' In his view, NGOs follow a donor-driven agenda. He gave the example of HIV/AIDS programme.

Given these high reservations about the NSPs across different tiers within the Ministry of Education, if the Ministry is still developing many partnerships with the NSPs then it shows that there is some external pressure or externally created incentives to do so.

3.5 Conditioning factors from the NGO side

Growing NGO presence & expertise
Pakistan today has a large number of NSPs: the total number of registered non-governmental organisations is estimated to be 45,000 (PCP 2002). The most quoted survey of Pakistani NGOs shows that only 18 percent of the registered organisations are involved in advocacy, thus an overwhelming majority is involved in service delivery (Ghaus-Pasha et al 2002). Also, the concentration of NSPs is not equal across the three sectors. In fact, the highest concentration is of FBOs involved in religious education (madrasas), which form 30 per cent of the total registered organisations. After that the next biggest concentration is of NGOs/voluntary organisations involved in secular primary education (8 percent) followed by health (4.5 percent) (Ghaus-Pasha et al 2002). This increasing number of NGOs has been matched with increased technical skills with the NGOs both for policy planning and service delivery and this has resulted in increased potential for supporting the state agencies in delivery of the social services.

Funding patterns of the donors
The ITA case in particular highlights the importance of funding trends of the donor agencies as an important conditioning factor for shaping the NSP-state relationship. Interviews with ITA raise an interesting point that changing funding patterns of the donors are also making it important for big education NGOs to engage directly with the government. Baela explains, 'We must remember that now government has the largest amount of funds. Within the shift toward direct budgetary support, the big donors are increasingly channeling more funds through the government. Under this system the NGOs are required to get the funds through the state rather than getting them directly from the donor agencies. So, the state is going to have increasingly large amounts of development funds at its disposal. Also, the government's own revenues are increasing through introduction of more extensive taxation system. So, it is foolish not to engage with the government.' She further added: 'We are increasingly becoming more frustrated with the development donors despite the fact that I have worked within these agencies. We recently had a very difficult experience where the donor agency was not approving the expenditure we had incurred for a position because it was applying normal rules for work done in emergency time in the earthquake hit area of Azad Kashmir. So their accounts departments were refusing to release the budget. We were so fed up that I don't want to engage with these donors.' But, so far she still does.

ITA's case also highlights how priorities of the corporate sector can shape the NSP-state relationship. Baela highlighted that in order to mobilize corporate donations it is important to work with the government sector as the corporate donors are more willing to fund activities focused on improving the state service delivery. She was of the view that the concept of corporate social responsibility is becoming more

popular with the business community. They have funds at their disposal, which they want properly invested in their area of operation. She adds: 'We are increasingly engaging with them to mobilize funds. We must remember that in our culture there is a strong sense of social responsibility where those who have resources feel the pressure to share some of their wealth with the bigger community for individual satisfaction as well as social status. Also, with the changing corporate rules under WTO, corporation and medium scale businesses have to invest in social responsibility. Even here we feel that the corporate sector is more willing to come forward if the services are geared towards improving the state education system.'

Thus, we see that influence of international development policy, weakening of capacity within the state and strengthening of technical skills within the NGOs constitute the prominent conditioning factors leading to growing space for the state-NSP relationships in Pakistan. The question then is that what is the nature of partnerships formed under these conditions.

4. Factors shaping the relationship

According to Baela, PPP is about managing reform for the government – the challenge is how to do it. 'There is a need to educate department people for example on issues of financing, budgeting, EMIS,' she argues. Baela is clear that the change can only come on a significant scale by working with the government. As Baela explains, 'Our strength is the technical expertise, which I have acquired over many years after working in three different countries. It is these technical expertise that make the government listen to us. I feel rather than working independently we should use these expertise to improve the state system. We conceive of ourselves as service delivery organization, which is aiming to become the biggest service provider to the government education sector. We have recently trained 1400 government teachers.'

She is also honest in her assessment that ideally what she would prefer the most is the state advisor position that she held for three years to continue. Drawing on her experiences, Baela is very clear that the most influential role is to be a government advisor: 'Running an organization like ITA gives me influence but of course it cannot match the influence one has when sitting in a senior government advisory position.' She thinks that the most influential part of her work was when the government included her in the Education Sector Reform Programme. 'The Public Private Partnership was all my input. The Early Childhood Education was also my inputs. I had a big role in developing these programmes. I also initiated reforms within education financing,' she explained. In her view, it is easier to get an idea accepted within the government if it is associated with someone within the system rather than a consultant. 'When I was advisor to the Minister, I used to ask the relevant officials to present the ideas to others in their own words and not to associate my name with it as then people are more likely to resist it as I was seen as an outsider,' she elaborates.

The reason she does not work with institutions like UN anymore is that she wants to see change in the country and she feels that there are limitations in things that one can follow when one is part of the system. 'I am also working on Sanjay Nagar project and the impact it has, UNESCO cannot have. Also, if I am sitting in UNESCO or UNICEF, I cannot write. I am not willing to accept these intellectual chains,' she elaborates.

Since government advisory positions don't last for long and are politically linked, and UN was not anymore a tempting option, the only other way of influencing the government was to establish a strong NSP known for its competence and expertise in the field and develop strong contacts within the system to be taken seriously by the state, donor agencies and the broader NSP community.

It is thus clear that it is the realisation that effective change can only come through reform of the state system that led ITA to work with the state from its very beginning. Also, having the past contacts with donors and then the government advisory position gave the right confidence and incentives to ITA leadership as there was a feeling that they can gain access within the state and get support from donors to push their agenda.

The relation between ITA and the government is very formal in terms of its written guidelines. ITA is in fact very proud of its ability to draw up MOUs as well as formal letters of agreement with the government and is very happy to share those documents with others. It also takes pride that it was the first NSP to initiate the preparations of such MOUs and have actually built the capacity of the district government to develop them as they did not have this capacity when ITA started the work. The relationship, however, developed instantly and at multiple levels. One of the reasons is obvious as ITA was formally established at a time when Baela had been appointed as the advisor to the Federal Minister for Education. ITA's leadership though argues that the work had started a year before she was appointed as an advisor.

Networks
Looking at ITA's experience it is clear that working within the state system even though for limited period has been critical in making ITA work successfully with the government. Baela explained that 'working at the federal level was very interesting as I learnt the process of working across the ministries. To work successfully with the government it is critical to understand the government language and processes.' Her experience showed her that people within the Ministry of Education don't know the budget language of the finance ministry and are therefore poor is arguing their case for increased budgets. This made things difficult, as education financing was an important aspect of education sector reforms. She also argues that within the NGO sector this knowledge is almost non-existent. Against this it was important that she learnt how the government proposals are made, who gets to decide what issue, and how policies can be shaped. 'Also, by working with the government I learnt to think systematically and at a

large scale. So, now I constantly look at any issue from the government angle and am constantly on the look out for opportunities to influence government decision,' she adds.

Baela maintains that technical know how is critical in winning respect within the government. However, she argues equally important is to network effectively: 'I could have had all the technical know how but no one would have approached me to engage with the government if I was not moving in the right circles and was not expressive about my views on reforms.' Baela is currently on the advisory board of public-private partnership cell established within the district government of Faisalabad. Once it is effectively working then it is to be replicated in any district. As part of this, Baela works on financing mechanism issues – she has technical expertise in this. She can use this to help with district education plans.

In ITA's experience in building the relationship the most important issue has been engagement with the bureaucracy rather than the Nazim/elected representatives. But, ITA staff maintains that it also depends on the personalities of the Nazim and the bureaucracy in a given district. If the Nazim is helpful then they have found it very useful to engage him but in some cases they have had to give up on the Nazim because he was too unfavourable to them. 'Actually, it requires being a bit strategic in every district and seeing which party is most forthcoming and then investing your energies in them. They are all important players. Even the members of the national assembly and the provincial assembly are important and we see which ones are most useful for our given objective,' adds Baela.

The staff in Islamabad also explained that the Nazim in Pindi has been very supportive and has become a big asset for us. 'He lends a lot of credibility to our work. He is now working towards taking over our schools established for working children. However, when it comes to actual planning and budget he has to hand over to the bureaucracy,' adds a staff member. ITA argues that the Nazim can be very helpful as he can make the phone calls and ask the bureaucracy to do things but the actual negotiations have to be with the bureaucracy who is in charge of actual budgeting and planning. 'I had learnt this lesson from the time I worked with the Minister. Till the bureaucracy does not agree, nothing gets done. So, Nazim or political leader is important for bringing policy shifts but getting them actually implemented one has to be work with the bureaucracy,' adds Baela.

Formality of the contract
ITA's relationship with the government is based at each level on very carefully drafted MoUs. To Baela, there were two main reasons for MOUs: 'I wanted the understanding to be formal. Sahee has a lot of problems in its work because it did not have formal relationship. Also we had to have formal agreement especially because we are giving technical support as a partner. In our case, we have to enter the government schools and we have to work through the teachers who are government employees so we simply cannot start the work without formal permission from the government. Thus, the MOU is very important for us. This way both us and they have some pressure for accountability.' She is of the view

that even if ITA can't implement everything in the MOU, at least it helps the process of exit. Initially, Baela developed the MOUs herself but other staff giver their inputs as to how the MOUs need to be changed in response to the actual problems faced in the field. 'We therefore took feedback from the field staff. We have not put the MOUs in front of the community. But, I don't think you can gain much from having community input in this process. After all, we have to remember that to get the community together for these activities requires a lot of investment of time and energy,' argues Baela.

For ITA developing the MOUs was a bigger issue at the beginning than now. At the beginning these were generally very new instruments for the government officials. So, an MOU developed for a district was often sent up to the province level as the district level officials were not willing to take responsibility for signing an MOU. So, the process at times took months (example quoted is chakwal district). But, the delay was not due to actual difference on what is to be included in the MOU. It was more about the file passing slowly through different tiers of the bureaucracy. 'We have realized that as long as no responsibility is made compulsory on the part of the government, they are happy to enter MOUs,' explains Saeed a senior ITA official. As a consequence all expectations from the government are written as provisional. This sets the government side at ease.

Elaborating on the development of MoUs, Mr Saeed, Coordinator, School Improvement Programme, who has been actively involved in developing the MOUs, argues that developing the MOUs has been important to our working from the beginning as it was critical to gaining access within the government schools. He also pointed out that in the beginning the MOUs used to take some time but now they are produced quite quickly. He says that the delays in the beginning were caused not due to any serious difference of opinion about the roles and responsibilities rather they happened primarily due to technical problems. First of all, the government system is such that files take a long time to move from one desk to the other. But, more then that the district governments were just not familiar with the process of developing an MOU so they were unable to initiate the process. 'This meant that basically we had to develop the MOUs for them,' he states. The delay after that often was in gaining permission from the top, as some of the district level officials wanted the MOUs to be vetted by government legal experts at the provincial level as they did not want to commit to anything that could land them in trouble. However, by now they have become very comfortable with the whole process as they have become more familiar with it.

The emphasis on not forcing any commitment on the government as part of the MOU is borne out by the study of the MOUs for the School Improvement Programme. Extract from the MOU signed with the City District Government (CDG) Lahore through its District Coordination Officer note such flexibility of commitment at many places:

'However, the term of agreement can be extended or reduced with mutual consent of the parties. If any party desires to rescind the agreement before the expiration of

its tenure of agreement that party shall serve six months notice in respect to the other party,' (Page 2).

'That City District Government shall not be liable to any financial liability except payments of emoluments of the CDG staff posted in the adopted school as permissible under the law,' (page 3).

Also, the MOU clearly places maximum authority in the hands of the government where ITA has to taken permission from the concerned district government officials before initiation of any academic programme or infrastructure within the school it has adopted.

The MOU also establishes some reporting demands on ITA: ' NGO will submit quarterly/monthly reports to CDG on its performance and also attendance and quality of teaching/ assessment methods with recommendations for improvement and corrective measures. This will be in the best interest of the school and the students,' (page 5).

However, the MOU does not demand ITA to develop its ideas and plans in collaboration with the government officials; the emphasis is more on gaining approval once the project has been developed.

Building relations
Despite, the formal contract equally important has been the cultivation of a good relationship with government officials where the ITA staff gives them much respect and credit. The understanding within ITA is that none of the staff will be rude to the government officials concerned. If the concerned government official is being too difficult then the staff are required to inform Baela who then intervenes. 'There are certain positions that senior ITA officials can take but if the junior staff take them then the government officials get very offended. I have no problem saying an apology,' explains Baela. In working with the government, as a policy Baela emphasizes that all staff should follow the normal channels. She is clear that the staff should not be dependent on her rather they should cultivate their own links. She only intervenes or makes a call if they fail to get things done through the concerned official despite trying all means.

5. The relationship in practice

Despite, the claims and the emphasis on state approvals visible in the MOUs what the fieldwork shows is that the relationship in practice is in some ways one-sided where the NSP rather than the state calls the shots. Undoubtedly ITA does have to take approvals from the concerned government officials for its activities in government schools and take reporting to the government officials very seriously but it is entirely up to ITA to propose these initiatives. There is little evidence of government officials identifying the need and making ITA respond to it. What the fieldwork shows is that it is ITA that controls the relationship because it engages

the government officials only at points where it needs help to implement the project; the government officials have no say in the project development and planning – a complaint raised by some of the officials. It seems that ITA is good at getting the government input where it wants it and then moving on without committing to many resources to cultivating a deeper partnership. Its ability to provide financial incentives like computers for district staff, physical infrastructure for schools, etc. seems to be a key factor facilitating such interventions.

5.1 The relationship in practice: in the day-to-day routine and in critical incidents

In order to see the difference between what was stated in the contract and what happened in reality, this section of the report first captures the views of the government officials about the programme as it helps see how they saw the relationship as opposed to what ITA claimed. Then it captures the expressions of the community about the effectiveness of the programme. Then it documents the level and type of interaction witnessed between the NSP and government officials. And, finally, it tries to explore some critical points that help highlight the key dimensions of the relationship in practice.

5.2 Views of government officials

It is clear from the field visits and interviews with the district government staff that those who have seen ITA's work from the start of the project were generally positive about their contribution. Amjad Varik, Assistant Director, Education, District government, Sheikupura was very positive and said: 'They ITA staff keep a lot of contact with us. Whatever they want to do they get it passed by us. They give us a lot of opportunities for training. From us they only demand human resource commitment. They do not create any financial burden on us.' He was also very appreciative of how ITA helped them gather data on schools in their area and helped them develop their training and monitoring cell. 'There are few other organizations also working with us, but the level at which they are able to support us no one else has been able to do that,' he added.

He explained that ITA does not have to involve the District Coordination Officer as it had built direct links with the concerned officials within the education division in the district government. He also explained that the nazim is only involved to the extent of being kept informed. He does not have to do anything with the day-to-day implementation of the programme.

He further added: 'Baela herself keeps direct contact with us. She often visits and always involves us. She also keeps a check on her staff to keep us engaged. She asks us about the performance of her staff and whether they have kept them informed and involved. She also takes us with her in the field so that we can jointly assess the situation. I am 100 per cent satisfied with their work. The problem with NGO

projects, however, is that they end when the funding finishes. We are asking UNICEF to extend this project.'

Similarly, the Nazim in Rawalpindi was generally positive about ITA's inputs. Raja Javaid, Nazim Rawalpindi added: "I have been impressed with ITA's work. I have seen the literacy centres that they are running for the working children. I think they are doing good work.' He was of the view that there are hundreds of NGOs nowadays but ITA's work is more visible than many. 'They are also working with ILO and are able to mobilize funds, which helps,' he added. He explained that they are also trying to take over the salaries and other running cost of the two of the ITA run literacy centres for the next year. 'Being in the field is a good way to assess an NGO's work. So, I have been out in the field with them. They also invite me to their functions from time to time. Also, as an elected representative I have been in touch with the people and we have local labour unions, women councils in the area who provide us feedback on the activities and projects in their area,' he added.

Interviews with teachers at the Government Girls' Primary School, Adopted by ITA and Nestle under PPP, reflected positively on ITA. The teachers in the school were on all very positive about ITA's input. They were of the view that ITA does not impose or try to monitor them rather it tries to respond to their needs. They said that ITA has helped build the boundary wall of the school and has provided computers and visual aids, which have all helped improve the quality of education and has attracted children back to the government school. They said that these facilities make the general working environment good for the teachers as well and in turn they feel more enthusiastic about doing their work. They were also appreciative of the teacher training facilities provided by ITA. However, they were not willing to concede that they did not know these teaching techniques before. The general response was that they already knew all these methods in the training they got as part of their formal government teacher training certificates. They, however, agreed that it was useful to get the training courses to refresh themselves of these techniques.

However, the EDO Education Sheikhupura district, the top official within the district, who was appointed just a few months back, refrained to comment saying that he does not know much about ITA interaction. The same response was given by some other senior officials in other districts appointed during the past year. Abdul Rehman Mali, EDO, Education, Kasur was posted in Kasur on June 2006 so he had been here for just over a year. Prior to this he was posted in Lahore for over four years. He was of the view that there has not been much benefit of ITA's work. 'Their main contribution has been that they provided our office some computers. But, even there one of my staff was telling me that the computers they provided broke down very quickly,' he elaborated. He further added that ITA had claimed to have done some teaching training and had given donations to some state schools. 'However, they do not coordinate much with us, at least not with me,' he added.

He said that since he had come here, ITA had mainly involved him in one or two functions that they held. It was at one of these functions that he learnt that they

were giving up to Rs 200,000 (£2000/=) to some selected schools. He advised them not to do this rather they should form Citizen Community Board (CCB), under which they can get the contributions matched by the government. He explained that the Kasur district government has millions of rupees lying unspent under the CCB budget but no good NGO proposals are coming forward to utilize these funds. He was of the view that CARE model in Lahore has been much more successful in mobilizing CCBs and utilizing these funds. 'I have seen the Care model closely in Lahore, they used to hold a regular fortnightly meeting with the district government officials, and a monthly meeting with the nazim. In case of ITA/Sudhaar Alliance, the contact is very adhoc,' he maintained.

He went on to say that he had not seen ITA's contribution in the schools that much and that there focus has been more on literacy programmes. He again complained that they do not keep him well informed. 'At times, I am told that they have done some training with government teachers and I don't know how they get to do that without informing us in advance,' he added. He explained that ITA officials recently came to him asking him to sign some certificates for some teacher training they undertook in 2006. He told them that he had no idea of when they did that training so he could not sign those certificates.

He concluded by saying, 'I don't have objection to NGOs taking advantage of donor aid. I say they can have their share but at least 70 percent of the donation should reflect in the final output. Currently, the NGOs hardly show any performance.'

Mohammad Aslam Shah, Executive District Officer, IT & Literacy, Kasur, who has been on this position for some year gave a more balanced view. He explained that he has been posted here since 2001 and have seen ITA's project from the start. He said that they have done some good work but the problem is that there is no sustainability to their work. He said that the project is coming to an end and the two-year literacy training they have provided to the girls becomes meaningless without imparting some useful skills or further education. He argued that their focus during this time has anyways been on government schools and literacy has only been a side concern for them, while he think this should have been given more importance (interesting as quoted above, the EDO thought that the reverse had happed).

He explained that most of work that ITA did in the district was done under a set programme with little flexibility. 'We were not involved in the development or design of the programme. We were asked to participate in various functions but our feedback was never sought or actively incorporated in the operations. The thing is that when you have already bought the ticket you have to follow the set route. Since they develop the project before they come to us they have no space to accommodate changes,' he argued.

He explained that as a result the literacy programmes that they ran were thus entirely developed by them. 'I asked them that they should work with us closely to

develop the syllabus and also get us to take exam of the children in their literacy centres as they had been doing this on their own. But, so far this has not been done,' he added. However, despite these complaints he was supportive of extending the project because in his view if it the project terminated in late 2007 when the funding comes to an end than whatever work it has done in terms of female adult literacy will go to waste as the girls will forget the basic skills in the next two years. He said that one of ITA's literacy programme for boys, which had a strong vocational education component, has however done quite well as it had enabled these boys to engage in economically productive activity.

5.3 Views of the community

Visits to the communities where ITA's work was currently ongoing also reflected positively on ITA but again with the concern for sustained intervention. The committee members were very positive about ITA's role in the school. It was clear that they had been actively involved by ITA along with other members in the management of the school. One of them said that Younis (ITA official accompanying us) is a 'dear friend' who they have known for a long time. He said that the school has dramatically improved since ITA's involvement as there are more teachers in the school (ITA has provided three teachers in this school) and also the children can now speak proper Urdu as opposed to speaking rural Punjabi. He said that ITA needs to stay involved for a long time so that at least one cycle of children complete full education and move on to good employment because only then will parents develop confidence in the education system again. 'Right now parents feel that even after education there is no employment so why send children to school,' he said. He was of the view that once children from this area are able to enter higher educational institutions and get proper jobs people will be convinced of the benefits of education. He explained that the school previously only had one teacher; ITA provided 3 more. Now they were facing a problem because the programme is coming to an end. 'It is important that the programme continues so it works through a full cycle so people can see the difference,' he argued. ITA officials were however unable to provide any convincing strategy for sustaining the work in the area once the project funding from US Department of Labour comes to an end.

5.4 Who dominates and how?

In case of ITA, all signs are that the relationship is dictated mainly by the NSP and the government officials have limited input in actual design of the project. The day to day running decisions about the project are all taken by the ITA staff members and the government staff are only included when their input is specifically required: for example, when signing teacher training certificates for ITA's trained teachers and for public speeches in the ITA held functions. The government officials especially at the district government level are rarely involved in the actual design of the project. Basically, ITA's approach falls between cooperation and

complementarity where it engages the government officials successfully for issues where it thinks it can benefit from government intervention but does not feel the need to engage with the government on every step of the project. It does not really aim for joint ownership of the project rather the focus is on getting ITA's inputs introduced in the government schools in a way that ITA's finds most fit.

5.5 Changes in the relationship: disputes or turning points

There have been no dramatic incidences of major disputes between ITA and the government officials so far. As seen in examples of ITA interaction with government officials, the over all approach is to resolve any tension with state officials by negotiation rather than confrontation.

Critical incidents
The above approach was visible in the case narrated by Nusrat Iqbal, Regional Coordinator ITA, Islamabad. In her experience if one engages the government officials with respect they eventually come around to cooperating with you. She explained that ITA runs most of its non-formal schools in government school building. Recently in one of the government schools in Islamabad, the principal was very reluctant to cooperate despite the fact that ITA had the written permission letter from the Directorate of Education. Most of the time the Principal did not turn up for the meeting. ITA had to eventually seek a letter from the District Education Officer asking her to extend her cooperation. She reluctantly started to engage. Initially, she was concerned that ITA children will break school furniture and swings. ITA explained to her that it takes full responsibility for any damage that might be caused. At the same time ITA started to invest in some of the infrastructural needs of the school by actively engaging the principal in the process. By the end of the programme, she had become extremely cooperative and positive about ITA's intervention. 'In my experience, what is very important in winning their trust is to give them respect and not to challenge them otherwise they start to feel threatened. Also, it is important to be sympathetic to their needs,' argued Nusrat. She further pointed that 'we give them credit for all the improvements rather than trying to take the credit.'

The same approach of negotiation and skilful manipulation rather than a strategy of confrontation is adopted by the top leadership of ITA. Baela explained that once they were very frustrated with a nazim in one of the districts who despite having signed the MoU was not letting ITA implement its programme. ITA did initially plan to sue him in court but then withdrew from the idea given that it would waste organizational energy and also spoil ITA's reputation within the government circles. The approach so far is to get ones' demands met by the government without having to confront it.

6. The effects of the relationship on the organizations

6.1. Changes to organizational agendas or working

In case of ITA, it is not actually the partnership with the government that seems to be affecting the organisational vision rather it is ITA's grand ambition of partnering with anyone who claims to work for education that poses the greatest threat to its core vision. This year, the Punjab Education Fund is going to become one of the biggest contributors to ITA's budget with its voucher scheme. When an organisation ends up having so broad an agenda then it is very difficult to argue that they really have a clear vision of public action as at times it appears that they are diluting their energies in too many directions and are partnering with players who actually have quite differing agendas. Yet, at the same time if any NSP can successfully impact even half the areas of interventions as pursued by ITA then it is undoubtedly an exceptional performance.

As for the Ministry of Education, it is clear that due to growing interaction with NSPs like ITA, there has been overtime a slight shift in the working of the Ministry where growing emphasis is placed on community mobilization and participation. There is also now growing recognition within the Ministry that NSPs like ITA have good technical skills to offer. But, this slight shift in perceptions and attitudes within the Ministry is not just the result of interaction with one NSP but is the accumulative affect of two decades of intervention by donor agencies and NSPs as discussed in the section on the conditioning factors.

6.2. Impact of the relationship on non-governmental public action

Views about current experiences
ITA is very positive about their experiences so far and its leadership always talks with a lot of confidence about the future interventions. It thus has little to say about what should be different. From the critiques of some of the government officials, however, it is clear that ITA should ideally try to involve the district level officials more actively in the planning process.

Ideal relationships
It appears that in the view of ITA, the ideal relationship is one where an NSP maintains multi levels of interaction with the state and where it keeps changing the focus of its intervention to suit its changing projects. Here the focus is not on either taking over the state's role in service provision nor on strengthening a particular need within the ministry of education in a sustained manner. Rather the focus is on shaping the over all vision and policies of the Ministry of Education in different educational matters and linking up with the concerned authorities when and where needed. This is a model where the NSP starts its work with an ambition of national level interventions from the start.

Conditions for effective partnerships

The case highlights the importance of donor interventions over time in opening up space for the NSPs to intervene with the state.

7. Conclusions

In case of the ITA, the positive side of the partnership is that they were able to cultivate enough ties within the government to get them to respond to ITA's need; the negative however is that ITA normally operates under fixed projects (some also restricted by donor guidelines) and does not engage the government officials in the design of the programme due to which a genuine ownership of the project does not develop on the government part. But, what is important to question is that does this matter if ITA's target was only to deliver the project for three years and then move out irrespective of whether the intervention is sustained or not.

More specifically, the case has highlighted that relationships where NSP is putting resources into the relationship have more appeal for the bureaucracy. It has also reconfirmed that NSPs, which rely on many development agencies projects are more vulnerable to changing their agenda or making them too broad as they survival depends on adapting to the changing aid priorities. For detailed analysis of the key findings from this case, please consult the conclusion of the comparative report.

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