

STAR'S LAND GRAMMAR SCHOOL, BOONI, CHITRAL



PROGRESS REVIEW

March 1999 to December 2002

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Star's Land Grammar School
Village and Post Office Booni, District Chitral, NWFP, Pakistan
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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Star's Land Grammar School is a privately owned registered school aimed at providing modern quality education to the young generation of upper Chitral in general and of village Booni in particular. The school is registered with the Government of North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and is located at village Booni- the headquarter of upper Chitral.

Chitral is one of the remotest districts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, located in the isolated mountainous region of Hindukush bordering with Afghanistan. The district is unique in today's world in terms of accessibility as it remains disconnected from the rest of the world for five to six months in winter every year when heavy snowfall blocks to the two gateways (10,500 feet high Lawari Pass in the south and 12,205 feet high Shandur Pass in the north) to Chitral. Because of its remoteness and isolation from the rest of Pakistan, Chitral has always been lacking behind in all respects. The local communities mostly make their livelihoods from below subsistence level farming activities on negligibly small holdings of cultivable land¹. According to 1998 census of the government of Pakistan, total population of the district was around 319,000 with an annual growth rate of 2.5%, thus, the estimated population of Chitral by the end of the year 2002 becomes approximately 350,000. The high population growth further reduces per capita land holding when as a tradition it is subdivided among the male children of a farmer.

Having said that, the local communities have been looking for diversifying their livelihood strategies off the farm, in from of public and private sector employment, village and

¹ According to Socio-Economic Survey of Chitral conducted by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in 1998, average landholding in Chitral is 9 kanals (approximately 4 chakwarums in local measurement scale)

household level commercial activities, retail businesses and seasonal migration to the down country for casual labour works. Among all these off-farm sectors economic alternatives, people prefer regular employment in government or private sector organizations to avoid the risk of breakdown in the income stream to the family otherwise the whole family suffers in this traditional society where joint family system prevails. But high rewarding job opportunities in any sector demands an individual to have high quality qualifications in today's world. And Chitrali's face extreme difficulties in job market only because of poor quality education in their early age schooling. Therefore, in order to ensure economic stability in future through high earning family members, each and everyone in Chitral is always ready to pay but to access the best educational institution to provide quality education to their children. In the present socio-economic scenario of this remote mountainous region, there are only a few families who can afford to bear the high fee for their children education in good schools in the down country. The rest of the poor majority Chitrali's have been depending upon the government schools, which, because of their low quality and inefficiency, can only produce clerks, police constables or a soldiers or class four employees. In addition, there are negligible numbers of government schools for girls in the whole district resulting in depriving the female community from being educated.

In view of the above situation, certain educated members of the society have been struggling to establish private schools- individual as well as community owned, in Chitral during the last two decades. Currently, such private schools have been opened and are successfully operating in almost all the big villages of Chitral. These individual and community owned private schools, which are usually called public schools in Chitral, established in different villages and run by different individuals or communities, offer

English medium modern education with their prime objectives of making the young generation successfully compete in the job market in the years ahead. The Star's Land Grammar School is also an outcome of the same process which is owned and run by Mr. Muzaffar Hussain Shah- a local young and zealous educated member of the society from village Booni, Chitral.

The motive behind taking the initiative of opening a school was to contribute, though in a minute amount but on regular basis, to socio-economic development of this isolated part of the world through a permanent institution. As a matter of fact, individuals born and die but institutions created for a noble cause always sustain and flourish. The person who starts such institutions may not be alive for a longer period but the vision which is materialized in the shape of an institution never dies. Also, unlike many other activities, institutions can not be created all of a sudden and when they are created they never remain static because they are comprised of various processes. Thus, when the idea of Star's Land School was floated to various friends and relatives in late 1998, there were more discouraging views than encouraging from all corners. There were, of course, good reasons for them to reject the idea at that stage, but in fact, whoever suggested in whatever form, has positively contributed to the establishment of this institution of learning. Finally, after a long series of brain storming and discussions, decision of starting the school was taken in early 1999. The school was formally initiated on March 6th, 1999 in rented building situated in the center of village Booni. The management of Star's Land School acknowledges the invaluable contributions of Mr. Magnus Marsden, an English friend from Cambridge University, at the initial stage.

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL

The main purpose of Star's Land Grammar School is to create an institution of excellence for quality and affordable English medium education to the young generation of Booni and its surrounding villages.

Following are the specific objective of the school:

1. To make modern schooling accessible to the common (poor and disadvantaged) members of the society for a reasonable and affordable fee
2. To offer the best available quality of education to the local students using modern innovative teaching methods
3. To develop linkages with local, national and international educational institutions (government and private schools, libraries, museums, educational clubs, scholarship/educational award providing institutions and print and electronic media) to provide the young generation with various opportunities for intellectual development
4. to provide free education to the disadvantaged groups of the society (children of poor and female headed households, with special focus on girls) offered by the school

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Star's Land School is a private institution owned, managed and run by Mr. Muzaffar Hussain Shah and his wife Jamila. However, there are three teaching staff members who are paid employees of the school. Mr. Muzaffar himself is the principal of the school and therefore hold the authority of any type of decision about the school, e.g., fee structure, fee remission, appointments or dismissal of the any employee, any purchase or payments etc. Nevertheless, all these decisions are made after a thorough discussion with all the staff members.

To resolve technical issues and provide expert opinions on various aspects of the school, an Educational Committee (EC) has been formed

which comprises, Head Teacher of Two government schools (for girls and boys) in Booni and the principal of the school. The EC meets quarterly to evaluate the performance of the school and to look various issues of concern.

In addition, the School Management has also formed an association of parents and teachers called Parents-Teachers Organization (PTO) The purpose of this body is community involvement in the whole process of the education through curricular and co-curricular activities in the school and to make the community own the school in terms of social and political support. Through this



forum, all the parents are invited to the school on quarterly basis and on the occasion of national and international days' celebrations.

REVIEW OF VARIOUS CO-CURRICULAR AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Unlike the traditional government schools, Star's Land Grammar School provides a friendly environment to its students within and outside the school. These include, picnic to the scenic hills around the village, visit of different government departments and

The two orphans (SLGS students)

Private organizations' office located in the main village of Booni, arrangement of musical programmes in the school, poetry and quizzes competition, walk around the village to know about the geography, mountains and rivers etc.

Since its inception in 1999, the school has been organizing picnic for its students on the nearby hills of Booni.

Also, the new comers are taken to different sub-villages of the main village Booni and are told about the areas, surrounding mountains, rivers, streams, springs, pastures and their importance.



Mr. Giles of Scotland, UK, did his Ph.D. research while staying in the village Booni. He initially worked with another community based private School-Pamir Public School Booni. Later on, he made significant contribution in connection with the establishment of Star's Land Grammar School. He is still, coordinating with the school in terms technical guidance and linkages development for the school in the UK.

Quarterly meetings of parents and occasional gathering of notables of the village in the school are also important events to provide the students with an opportunity to express their potentials in front of mature members of the society.

As mentioned earlier that developing linkages of the school with other local, national and international educational institutions is one of the objectives of the school. Such linkages are important to expose the students to the wider world and to make them learn working in partnership with other institutions and organizations. As a part of this process, during the year 2000, with the help of Mr. Giles of Scotland, UK,

Star's Land Grammar School was twined with a school in Scotland named Gatamour School.

As a learning event the students were taken a big hydro power station at village Reshun. The purpose of this visit was to make the students personally see how is the electric power produced and transmitted to the consumers.

ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR THE SCHOOL BUILDING

As discussed in the beginning, the school was initially started in a rented building. At the same time, the management was looking for acquisition of a piece of land in the center of the village to construct a proper and permanent building for the school. Finally, in the 2001, around five kanals of land was taken on lease in the center of the village and proper building was constructed.



Star's Land's Students in the class room

The current building is consisting of six class rooms, an office and two toilets. In addition, there is also a play ground in the premises of the School. The school has also allocated space for further construction of classroom, science laboratory and an extensive library, which are to be established.

In October 2001, the school was shifted to its new building with high-level celebration. Notables of the village, government officials

and representatives of NGOs participated in the programme. Students of the school presented a colourful show on the occasion.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Computer literacy and introduction of information technology is an important component of an educational institution in the 21st century. With the generous support of Mr. Magnus Marsden of Cambridge University, UK, the school has been successful in providing computer literacy and Internet facility to its students. There are three computers and a printer in the school at present. Further more machines will be purchased as per availability of financial resources in the years ahead.

The Star's Land School does not undermine the importance of participation of women community in its activities. As a tradition of the society, government institutions never bother to involve mothers in their activities but in contrary to that, the modern private schools consider the mothers as equal partners and more responsible for children' grooming than fathers. Thus Star's Land has also been inviting mothers of its students to the school on different occasions to make feel the ownership of the school and enhance their interest in the academic achievements of their children.

EXENTION OF THE SCHOOL TO ANOTHER VILLAGE -PARWAK

Parwak is a village, situated on Chitral to Gilgit Road, approximately 14 kilometers to the north of Booni. There are other villages, namely, Sonoghur, Meragram and Nisur Goal, surround the village Parwak. On a request and consistent demand from a few influential community members of village Parwak, the school was extended to that village by opening another branch of the school with the same name. To this end, the land was taken in the result of mutual contract between the school authority and local landowner on permanent bases.



The school was launched on 26th February 2002. Admissions were given to 30 students in the KG and Class 1. On the day of inauguration, a general meeting was held, where community members addressed and the objectives of the school were made clear to them.



Star's Land Grammar School, Parwak

The school is situated in the center of village Parwak. The school building is comprised of 5 classrooms, one office, two toilets and a boundary wall around the school. The school premises has the capacity of further extension to 10 more rooms when required.

There are two female teachers, and one male teacher, and a peon employed at the school at present.

FUTURE PLANS

The Management of the school has planned to build 6 more rooms in the next five years, to meet its requirements. Apart of this, further land would also be purchased as and when required

The School would also purchase more computers and other equipments in the years ahead.

The management has also planned to purchase audio-visual equipments for the school as teaching and learning materials. These include, Video and Audio Cassette and CD players, TV, Video and still cameras.

The school would also work in close collaboration with other private and government school in the area for teacher's trainings, various events for the students and achieve other common goals.

For teacher trainings, the school would develop linkages with the Aga Khan Education services and other institutions, such as, Professional development Center for Northern Areas. According to some reliable sources, the professional development center of the Aga Khan University is also going to be opened in Chitral that would be highly useful for the school in terms of capacity building of the teaching staff.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

Star's Land Grammar ar Star's land the SLGS is to impart a viable Grammar School has been carried out keeping in view the requirement of standard education in the remote village of district Chitral called Booni. Though Booni consists of Girl's and Boy's School; yet it is hard to believe that they have been giving any substantial education improvement to the community over here in Booni. There are some Public schools being operated by the conglomeration of owners. But the problems with those schools are their high rate of fee structure, which is beyond the paying capacity of the economically poor people. Thus the

main concern is to provide education to the economically poor people on cheap fee.

Star's land Grammar School is a privately owned school with a prior aim to impart standard education to the community where the conception of standard education is non-existing. As it goes without saying that viable education calls for a strong financial backing owing to the low fee structure in order to ensure the education of the abysmally poor people in the community.

As it has already been mentioned that SLGS is aiming at the standard education at low fee structure which, in itself causing economic problems in addition to the untimely payment on the part of the parents, as they do not have money to pay within the prescribed timeframe. Furthermore, the parents are unaware of their responsibility towards the financial needs of the schools and as such they do not evince interest to pay school fee.

Some sect of dogmatic religious minded people has politicized the existence of SLGS in to do maximum damage to its operation. These are the people who are of the view that SGS is imparting a brand of education, which is far from satisfaction as far as mainstream religious idea of the community is concerned. These people are on propaganda spree against the school and as such admission turn out in the school has not been so enviable.

INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES

The school is privileged and fortunate enough to have contacts with Trinity College of Cambridge University UK, the students

Detail of enrolment of students at SLGS booni and parwak.

and fellows of which provide advice to the school.

The school has also linkages with the University of Glasgow of Scotland through Professor Dr. Peter and Azra Meadows. It has also been twined with a school in Scotland through Mr. Gile of Scotland.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The school waives fees for students from poor background. The school for instance' has been providing free education for the past four and half years to more than five students, two of them are orphaned brothers. they don't have any property, except a Hut and widow mother. The school authority is trying to find the way to finance their further education.

FEE STRUCTURE

Admission fee: Rs.200 /-
Tuition fee(KG class) Rs.100/- per month
Class 1st : Rs.150/-per month
Class 2nd and above: Rs.200/-per month

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Class	Boys (#)	Girls (#)	Total (#)	Total dropped out (#)	Total no of students at Parwak school
KG	18	7	25	8	KG: 20students
1 st	22	4	26		1 st : 10 students
2 nd	20	5	25		Out of the total 10 are girls
3 rd	23	8	31		
4 th	19	12	31		
Total			138	8	30

DONORS

1. Mr. Magnus Marsden, Cambridge University, UK
2. Professor Dr. Peter and Azra Meadows, University of Glasgow, UK
3. Mr. Giles Waley and June Waley, Scotland, UK
4. Schawallate, UK

FRIENDS

1. Mr. Magnus Marsden, Cambridge University, UK
2. Professor Dr. Peter and Azra Meadows, University of Glasgow, UK
3. Mr. Giles Waley and June Waley, Scotland, UK
4. Mr.Charles and Lucila Marsden, UK.
5. Schawallate, UK
6. Mr.indrieas and Socalo Wado Austria.
7. Mr. Danial , UK.
8. Mis. Zehra, Headmistress, Government Girls High School, Booni

9. Mr. Sahiburakhman, Headmaster, Government Boys High School Booni
10. Mis.Gulsmbar, DEO female education District chitral .
11. Shah Kareez Consultant of Aga Khan Education Services Chitral
12. Mr.Shamsurehman (Tehsil Nazim).
13. Mr.sardar Hussain
14. Mr.dougles, Scotland
15. Mr.Wellium, UK.
16. Mrs.Margrate Miller (Gatamour School)
17. Mr.Ehsanul Haq (Manager MER AKRSP)
18. Annemik, Holand.
19. Salamat Khan (Convener AKSWB Chitral)
20. Sherzad Ali (Raghodook)

TEACHING STAFF

1. Mr. Muzaffar Hussain, Principal
2. Mrs. Jamila Muzaffar, Teacher
3. Mr. Aminul Haq, Teacher
4. Mr.Saeed qayum , teacher
5. Mr.Dedar ali, teacher
6. Shaila bibi , volunteer teacher

