

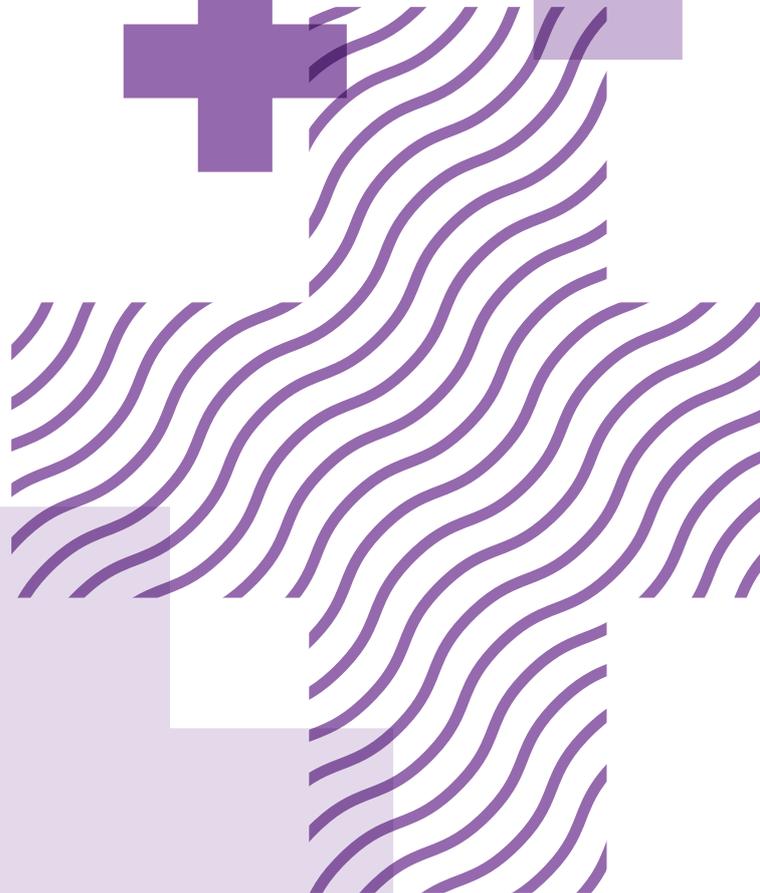
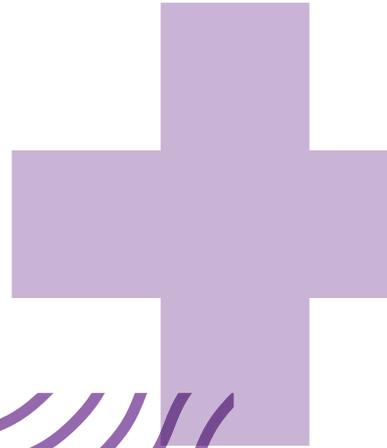
Programmatic approaches to the gender-related impacts of COVID-19 on education: Lessons from 2020

Case study: Siyani Sahelian-
Advancing Action for
Adolescent Girls (A3G)

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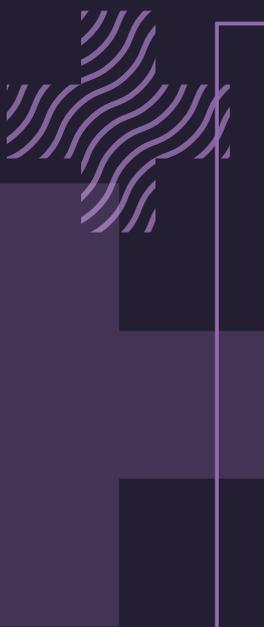
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ADVANCING
ACTION FOR
ADOLESCENT
GIRLS



Case study: Siyani Sahelian- Advancing Action for Adolescent Girls (A3G)

Empowering out-of-school adolescent girls in three districts of South Punjab (Bahawalpur, Muzaffargarh and Rahimyarkhan) through post-primary opportunities for learning gains, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), livelihoods and life skills.





About the programme

Siyani Sahelian is a programme for marginalised adolescent girls (aged 9-19) in South Punjab, Pakistan. The programme offers a 'second chance' to out-of-school adolescent girls who have either dropped out of school with little or no learning, or who may have never enrolled in school due to their circumstances. In a span of two years (2018-2020), the programme has equipped 11,000 girls who have never been to school with functional literacy/numeracy skills and mainstreamed girls into formal school. The programme has also enabled 6,500 girls who had previously dropped out of school to complete their primary, middle and secondary education.

A3G has supported the economic empowerment of adolescent girls by extending certified vocational skills to 3,500 girls (aged 14-21) in diverse industries¹, along with one week of training on financial literacy and entrepreneurship with industry linkages. In the programme context, adolescent girls' drop-out is largely due to patriarchal norms, child labour exploitation, early marriages, customary discrimination and even violence². A3G therefore extends a 60-hour life skills programme to all participants. This incorporates training on self-realisation, physical changes in young girls/boys, health and hygiene, gender and sex education, communication skills, self-confidence, awareness of rights, self-defense and self-identity. The programme has been extended for one year (April 2020-March 2021) with additional targets of 16,000 adolescent girls across the same locations.

- 1 This includes domestic tailoring, fashion design, poultry farming, kitchen gardening, machine embroidery, gota work, Adobe Photoshop, and more.
- 2 [Barriers to Girls' Education in Pakistan](#) (2018) Human Rights Watch

COVID-19 context

Pakistan has the second largest number of out-of-school girls after Nigeria³. The COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened the status of girls' education in the country, leaving millions of girls at the risk of never returning to school and losing half of their total years of education. After this period of pandemic, national and provincial statistics in Pakistan, as in most other countries, are likely to report a sharp increase in the number of school dropouts by adolescent girls due to early and forced marriages, domestic labour, lack of safety measures for girls in schools and/or strains on household disposable incomes due to job losses.

Programme response to the gender-related impacts of COVID-19 on education

Phase 2.0 of the A3G programme was scheduled to launch just as the COVID-19 outbreak happened. In response, the programme activities were shifted to a home-based model which began with a small-scale survey. This was used to obtain insights on the availability of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) devices at the household level and identify the right blend of learning approaches to be pursued. Informed by the survey findings, households with little or no access to ICT devices were provided with printed learning packs and tablets to ensure continued learning for the most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach adolescent girls. AG3's response to COVID-19 focused on four broad categories: academics, accelerated and second chance learning and assessments; creativity expression and healing; health, WASH and psychosocial support; and vocational skills and livelihoods.

Ensuring continuity of education through online learning and assessments

Teachers were provided with curricula, academic calendars, reading material, sample lesson plans and in-built assessments to ensure effective implementation of 'learning from home' approaches. Teachers created WhatsApp groups of students in clusters to share online materials and assessments. The online learning content comprises daily lessons and videos with audio clips and additional media. Assessments are taken after every two weeks and are conducted at home under the supervision of parents/guardians. The students undertake the assessment at home, and then share images of their work with the community teacher via WhatsApp.

Virtual life skills training and psychosocial support

Alongside academic learning, students are also provided with virtual sessions on life skills and psychosocial support with concurrent engagement of parents and teachers. ITA has partnered with Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy Films to develop customized animated films which highlight education as a tool for empowerment. The films have helped to raise awareness among girls and women on issues such as nutrition, menstrual hygiene, financial literacy, understanding self-awareness, and the importance of education. In addition, the programme has identified 90 girls who will be mentored throughout the programme cycle to become champions of girls' education and lead training for other girls in their communities on life skills, ed-tech learning, health/nutrition and financial literacy.

3 [PAKISTAN EDUCATION STATISTICS 2016 -17](#) Government of Pakistan

Programme outcomes

ITA has worked closely with the Federal and Provincial Education Departments throughout this period to support their efforts to make no-, low- and hi-tech solutions accessible for education, health, WASH and livelihoods training. As a result, resources and content developed through AG3 were selected and approved to be aired on national TeleSchool during the COVID-19 period⁴. The girls who graduated from the vocational skills strand have been important actors in efforts to combat the impacts of COVID-19. By quickly identifying the increasing demand for protective products against COVID-19, these graduates produced 8,000 facemasks which were sold in the markets (both retail and wholesale). Adhering to the 'work-from-home' model with just a sewing machine, raw materials, design and some thread, these young women took on the role of solution providers and generated income for their households in this challenging time.

Learnings and challenges

Whilst home-based models of online learning are very inspiring, it's important to consider low-tech interventions (TV/radio) to target the most disadvantaged children. In Pakistan, mobile phones represent a low-cost tool which children in urban slums, students in remote areas and out-of-school children can access. ITA has therefore focused upon this model to promote continued learning for the most marginalised, as an alternative distance education model suited to low resource environments. Teachers were trained in using phone calls, SMS messaging and WhatsApp to help students build foundational skills, revise content and offer psycho-social support. Where households and students had access to smartphones, the programme offered a curated list of applications with curriculum-aligned content for primary and middle grades. However, it remains crucial to ensure that the content is tailored to the local context and teachers are able to provide additional scaffolding where necessary.



4 The Federal Government launched Teleschool which is a dedicated TV channel aired by Pakistan Television (PTV) across the country from 8am to 6pm for online education aiming to serve grades K to 12. ITA's resources on life skills and creativity/storytelling were approved by the Ministry to be aired on the TeleSchool.

Looking beyond the immediate COVID-19 crisis

ITA will continue to work with schools, families and communities in close coordination with the provincial and local education departments on 'building back better' and ensuring learning and wellbeing of all in the 'new normal'. When schools reopened in September 2020, the programme launched enrollment campaigns led by community activists across the targeted locations to safeguard the enrollment and retention of girls at risk of dropout. Almost 9,000 girls are currently in the process of completing their second-chance primary, middle and secondary education and 2,000 girls are being equipped with vocational skills to help them become economically empowered. The programme is also focusing on enhancing participants' English proficiency, digital skills and awareness of social issues.

In partnership with the EDGE programme of the British Council, 300 of the programme participants are building their leadership skills and confidence to learn English and digital training in peer-led after-school clubs. A number of girls will also be mentored and trained to become 'Champions of Girls' Education' and their stories will be published as case studies to support back to school campaigns and promote the global agenda to #LeaveNoGirlBehind.



More resources to explore:

[Siyani Sahelian - Advancing Action for Adolescent Girls \(A³G\) ITA webpage](#)

[Evaluation of the Siyani Sahelian \(SS\) Programme in South Punjab](#) (2020) Oxford Partnership for Education Research and Analysis

[Advancing Action for Adolescent Girls Blog](#)

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Page 5 - © Team Siyani Sahelian. Siyani Sahelian offers a 'second chance' to out-of-school adolescent girls who have either dropped out of school with little or no learning, or who may have never enrolled in school due to their circumstances.

Page 6 - © Team Siyani Sahelian. Siyani Sahelian promoting the global agenda to #LeaveNoGirlBehind

Page 6 - © Team Siyani Sahelian. In 2021, Siyani Sahelian will provide mentorship and training for girls to become 'Champions of Girls' Education'.



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