

# Creating Friendly and Functional Learning Environments:

*UNESCO Teacher Trainings help increase student retention and completion in primary schools*

Jalo village, 3 kilometers away from Mansehra, NWFP – August 2009, classes are in progress in Government Boys Primary School. The small two room structure of the school echoes with the voice of teachers taking lessons and some students playing in the small dusty grounds. The school has 105 students studying in classes one to six, and three teachers.

“We have 3 classrooms in this school, 2 proper rooms and one veranda, the two other teachers and myself, have now successfully managed to teach all 6 classes, using multi-grade teaching methodology” says Syed Asif Shah, the school’s head teacher. Shah has recently attended Head Teacher’s Training, conducted by Provincial Institutes of teachers Education (PITE) with the support of UNESCO. The two day long training provided project orientation and focused on school and class management, food for education, school improvement through food and none food items, and food distribution and administration.



GGBS Jalo, near Mansehra: Head teacher Syed Asif Shah responds to a student’s question

We decided to reduce physical punishment in school, and its impact on students is unmistakable” says Shah. “They are no longer afraid to come to school!”

Shah is excited about what he learnt during the training. “It is extremely important for resource constrained schools like ours to have trainings like these, and learn new teaching methodologies and management principles,” shah says. Corporal punishment is accepted means for implementation of rules and discipline in Pakistan’s government-run schools. The trainings also focused on student rights, and explained the harmful effects of using physical punishment. “After the training, we decided to reduce physical punishment in school, and its impact on students is unmistakable” says Shah. “They are no longer afraid to come to school!”



GGBS Jalo, near Mansehra: Syed Asif Shah teaches 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade about pollination in a joint class session.

Conducted in selected districts of NWFP, Balochistan and Sindh, where rising inflation has resulted in escalating dropout rates of school children, the activity is a part of USAID supported Government of Pakistan-WFP-UNESCO Joint Pilot Food and Other Incentive-based Assistance to Primary Schools project under Food Security Relief Program in Pakistan. The trainings are conducted with the objective of improving elementary school enrolment, capacity building of the education department staff, and to increase retention and completion, especially of girl students and vulnerable groups. UNESCO aims to provide schools in NWFP and Sindh with teaching and learning aids, developed messages to be shared with parents during school days, and documented the effects of food and non-food incentives on enrolment and retention. Of the 3500 schools the project aims to benefit, 1500 schools were provided with the teaching and learning kits, till August 2009.

Shah is pragmatic about the effects of the trainings “we still have many problems and trainings cannot solve them for us, but they help us in dealing with them in a better manner”.