Distance Learning during COVID-19: Developing reading materials
Mapping the development and outcomes of SENSA Kitab Kahani supplementary readers

Oxford Policy Management

UKaid from the British people

What is Kitab Kahani?

Kitab Kahani is a self-learning resource in Urdu and Sindhi. This set of three booklets was used by fifth-grade students at 300 community schools operated by HANDS for the FCDO-funded SENSA programme in Sindh, Pakistan.

Outcomes

66% of teachers said children found the booklets simpler and more interesting than their textbooks. **90%** said students used them to connect to their studies. **70%** said students achieved new learning outcomes. Parents reported that students enjoyed the booklets and read them on their own.

Kitab Kahani strengths

- Empowered child characters making proactive choices.
- Story format with a beginning, middle and end.
- Themed, life-like content (e.g. focusing on life skills or STEM topics).
- Simple and conversational language, with a few child-friendly poetic verses.
- Information from textbooks woven into story plots, to achieve student learning outcomes.
- Interdisciplinary stories and end-of-chapter/while-reading tasks.
- Application and analysis tasks requiring students to connect learning to their lives.

Why Kitab Kahani?

To allow students to study during COVID-19 school closures – to minimise loss of subject matter knowledge, encourage new learning gains, and prepare students for school re-opening.

Challenges faced in developing content

To reduce academic loss, the team had to work fast; the first reader had to be written, designed and printed within three months of school closure. The booklets also had to be compact so they could be delivered to the **7,000** student households.

Challenges faced

Original art could not be created due to time and resource constraints so images from the internet had to be used. Also, there was minimal parental support for students due to high illiteracy rates.

Programme strengths

- Academic leads at HANDS and Oxford Policy Management (OPM) had experience in writing for children.
- As schools were closed, OPM school monitors adapted to new tasks like content translation and development.
- The HANDS project team had strong capability and delivered the booklets quickly.

Key elements of effective content to meet objectives

Content combined storybook and textbook elements; it was informative as well as fun to read; the storylines were engaging with a relatable setting, but also had fantasy elements like heroic characters who solved real-life problems. Content was relevant to students' lives (e.g. coping with COVID). The text was easier than textbooks, to suit students of various competency levels.