



# Investing in Child and Youth development in Pakistan to unlock human capital potential.

**LEAPS** is a youth-led early childhood care and education programme implemented in four districts in Sindh, Pakistan: Dadu, Naushahro Feroze, Khairpur and Sukkur. The goal of the two-generational approach, investing in youth and young children, is to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals' targets in education:

**4.2** By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education.

**4.4** By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Investment in early childhood and youth development improves educational outcomes and economic opportunities for the next generation; however, in Pakistan:

- **Nearly half of 4-year-olds** are out of school (UNICEF, 2013). Access to high quality preschools improves children's school readiness and educational success.
- Youth comprise **33% of the Pakistan working-age workforce** (Mahmood, 2013), but significant numbers of youth, especially female youth in rural communities, are unable to access employment, education or training.

The LEAPS programme addresses these challenges to unlock human capital in the next generation. The National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), with technical partners at the Aga Khan University and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, is training female youth in rural communities in Sindh to deliver preschool services.

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Female Community Youth Leaders, aged 18-24 years, with at least 8 years of formal education receive a 2-week centre-based training followed by a 1-year on-the-job vocational training delivering preschool services. A Mentor who provides supervision and coaching supports the Community Youth Leaders.

Young children, aged 3-5.5 years, receive at least 1-year of preschool education. The preschool runs 6 days a week for 3 hours each day. The curriculum adopts evidence-based practices to deliver high quality early education.

LEAPS is being independently evaluated to assess the program's impact on young children's readiness for school and youth development. Pilot results from a 2015-2016 study were promising and showed young children benefitted in their early numeracy and literacy skills, social-emotional development and motor development. In addition, the female youth were successfully able to complete their vocational training and many continued to participate in the workforce or advance to higher education.



### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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