

# Roqiza, the agent of change!

---

'If I were president I'd change the educational system of Pakistan', a thought like that crosses our minds every time we see a child on the street picking garbage to make a living. While the sentiment is genuine, the paradigm we choose is awfully wrong. You don't need to be in a position of power to bring change. The story that follows is a true example of how positive thinking and simple paradigms can bring a massive change in the lives of those around us.

Ms. Roqiza, a 24 year old girl, is a resident of a small village named Killi Sahi Amanullah Ghot Kandaro, Union Council Derakalaho Tehsil Naal. The village is 170 kilometers away from District Khuzdar. She is

the only lucky girl in her family to have a Matriculation certificate. In a province where more than a million children are out of school, Ms. Roqiza is amongst the lucky few to have been educated. The nearest school from her village is 2.5 kilometers away, which she used to travel by foot, despite all odds of cultural taboos.

"Growing up I had to walk a long distance to go to school" says Roqiza "my brother accompanied me to school to ensure my safety. After my matriculation I decided to teach the children in my village so they would not have to worry about walking so far every day" she continues.

Two years ago, she used logs in her backyard and erected a structure to provide shade from the harsh sunlight. She gathered the village children and established a school. Every day about 30 village children come to her from 9 to 1 pm, like they would to a normal school. "I



Roqiza's students in front of their school

use my old textbooks and teach the children. I have no formal training to teach but I try to mimic my school teachers to impart education” says Ms. Roqiza with a sense of pride.

Her father, a farmer by profession, tried to seek the government’s support by visiting the Department of Education. They received a chalk board and attendance register. Since the past 02 years the school has been functional on resources tapped through the community itself with a major contribution from Ms. Roqiza.

Ms. Roqiza’s school was found during a field visit to district Khuzdar, as part of the initial schools’ site selection activity by Global Partnership for Education - Balochistan Education Project (GPE-BEP), a unit of Education Department, Government of Balochistan. GPE-BEP is a Global Partnership for Education funded project working to promote education particularly girls, across 31 districts of the province. The project is in its early stages of implementation. The three year project aims to build 725 gender free community schools across the province while upgrading 95 primary schools to middle and 25 middle to High schools. Furthermore, the project aims to improve quality and accountability of government teachers by developing their capacity, assessing the learning outcomes of students and establishing a School Management Information System. A framework to develop effective management and monitoring systems will also be introduced while at the same time technical assistance facilities will also be established.

People like Roqiza are a sign that inhabitants of Balochistan are seeking ways to contribute to education in the province. As the field staff combs through the 31 districts, it is highly likely that inspirations like Roqiza will populate the provincial map. GPE-BEP is driven towards bringing schools to the communities that deserve them the most. Elaborate schools’ site selection criterion has been laid out for the project and communities meeting the criteria will be selected.

The major criteria being maximum number of school age children in a community and farthest distance from any school. This innovative way of selection of schools, identifies the appetite and need by the communities, which defies old and traditional way of selection of schools by a selected few. ‘I don t have to go to my sardar to seek a school now’, Roqiza father smiled.