

Child Development and Youth Leadership Program

Insan Foundation

INSAN BEGAN ITS WORK IN 1992 with the mission to provide basic literacy skills to the child workers and street children in Lahore, the second most populated city of Pakistan. “Insan” is an Urdu word that stands for “human” and serves as the basic principle for the organization to work *for* and *with* all humans irrespective of any identity. Insan faced one of the glaring realities in the factory area of Lahore at that time—the considerable population of children working in automobile workshops, small hotels and shops whose exploitation put at stake their own future in particular, and their humanity in general. Thus, Insan wanted to do something for them as well as for humanity.

The volunteers of Insan, who started off its first ever Child Education Program in 1992, hailed from urban universities and colleges. Those youth were under the impression at the outset that poverty was the fundamental reason of children’s being at the workplaces or streets than schools. They believed so because they themselves were from the privileged class and were thus unaware about the political side of poverty. So, their first impression while approaching the deprived children was driven by “mercy” rather than “critical consciousness.” However, their naive perception vanished very soon when majority of the children revealed that they had attended schools at least once in their lives but dropped out because of corporal punishment by the teachers and the threatening and dull environment existing at their

schools. Therefore, the harsh reality coming from the children themselves helped Insan come to the conclusion that it needed to make its educational program “attractive”, “meaningful” and “relevant” and it should involve parents and communities in the process. This was how games, theater, exposure trips and community festivals and meetings became part of the ‘informal educational system’ and children found themselves to be at home and well-connected to the organization.

Insan in Brief

Insan Foundation Trust (IFT) is a non-profit and pluralist organization, working to protect, support and promote the human rights of the most marginalized sections of society, especially children, women’s empowerment, negotiated peace, good governance and sustainable development. It operates in Pakistan with the following objectives:

- To mobilize, educate and train youth groups, communities and government and non-government institutions to ensure healthy development of deprived children
- To demonstrate social, political and economic viability of gender equality and women’s empowerment with the involvement of women, communities, government and non-government structures and institutions
- To enable stakeholders to protect, support and promote sustainable development and negotiated peace as a social value and belief.

Insan Foundation was registered in 2002 under the Trust Act 1882. It changed its formal name in 2008 into the Insan Foundation Trust, in compliance with the rules of the Trust Act.

Aside from the members of its Board, there are twenty-one full-time staff members and about three hundred forty volunteers working with Insan. Since 2009, Insan has been running two fundamental programs, i.e., Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Program and Child Development and Leadership Program, through Capacity Development, Research, Advocacy and Technical Assistance.

Insan implemented its first program for eight years. It established educational centers that were mostly located in factory area and urban slums of Lahore. These centers are working in urban and semi urban and rural areas. During its first eight years, Insan catered to about a hundred students per

six months in each of the six educational centers. At one point of time, Insan also launched one such center in a village called “Theatre” near the Pakistan-India border.

The technique of education coined by Insan was very innovative but very simple. Insan used newspapers for enabling children to identify alphabets, connect them to make words and words into sentences in two to three months time. Very soon, children got used to being able to identify basic social, political and economic issues of their communities also. Then the organization engaged them in reporting incidents of child rights and human rights violations taking place in their communities. Selective reports were published in the newsletters. Sometimes children also draw and gain space in the newsletter’s art-corner. This was how Insan moved with its Child Education Program in which “critical consciousness” remained at the center stage. It was through this process that children came to know how badly society was treating children as well as women. They started asking questions as to why men killed women.

In eight years of work, many of the students became volunteers and started helping Insan undertake theater shows, even in the streets and bazaars, in Lahore and elsewhere to educate people about the negative impact of child labor and poor educational system on children. “Mistree Natik” or “Mechanics Theatre”, which was named after the first batch of child workers who were mostly automobile mechanics, also started performing in every nook and corner of the province. And it was noted on the way that their relationship with their child-apprentices was very different from the one which they faced as children themselves.

The street plays, as they progressed, improved on their themes. During years of work, Insan’s opinion about the problem of child labor started shaping in a holistic manner. Insan started feeling that child labor existed because of poor educational system which was the product of poverty of *resources* as well as *thought*. The poverty of thought refers to development priorities and the political will of the policy makers. The organization realized that the issue of child labor could not be addressed unless development priorities of Pakistan were aligned to the cognitive needs of children; Pakistan increased spending on children rather than on bombs and guns; and the state took care of girl children and women. Some years down the road, Mistree Natik and the educational centers developed a consensus about peace, girl’s rights education and women’s rights as priorities of its advocacy initiatives along with basic literacy and child rights education.

Synthesis: From Delivery to Capacity Development

As Insan moved to the end of 2000 its work had synthesized and the organization felt that it was being pushed to explore new venues. The organization was under great pressure from new communities and old and new students to further ramify and this stress prompted it to realize that it could not manage to go with the same speed and in the same direction due to the scarcity of financial resources. The organization analyzed that there was a need for more local groups and organizations to join the struggle and moving one step ahead—from service delivery to advocacy and training—was a must. It felt it was in a position to share its experience and transfer the corporate knowledge gained in all those years. It concluded that providing “equality” education to all children was the prime responsibility of the state according to the national and international commitments and that unless peace, human rights education and women’s rights became first priority of the state of Pakistan, there was hardly any constructive change expected. This realization then guided Insan in launching a national-level capacity development, peace advocacy program and women’s rights education program with small like-minded groups, organizations and institutions across Pakistan.

The training program, called Child Labor Advocacy and Training Program, was logically an offshoot of the Child Education Program. It helped partner groups and organizations design and undertake similar forms of programs according to their own local realities. Through this program, Insan moved from stage 1 to stage 2, from delivery of the services to training and motivating many more groups and organizations on “how to institutionalize, mobilize and deliver.” The organization developed a range of training manuals, educational games and organizational development tools and checklists, etc. The training workshops and exposures included comprehensive introduction to the social, political, economic and legal side of the issue of child labor, child rights, role of the government and the state, human and financial resource mobilization, program design and proposal writing, program monitoring, reporting and evaluation, etc.

In four years of the training program since 2000, Insan trained forty organizations and helped them design long-term child development and leadership programs. As follow up in the capacity development program, the forty organizations made child labor education and peace activism as part of their organizational missions and programs.

By disseminating information and motivation material, Insan expanded membership in its peace campaign, Dove Day, to interested segments of society, mostly youth and their parents.

Insan launched this peace campaign in 2002 in the context of war hysteria and armed conflicts in the regional context. The members of this campaign used to gather at Lahore and Islamabad at one point every month and fly dove cutouts to voice out peace and demand symbolically from the state to opt for peaceful negotiations to solve the conflicts.

Women's rights education remained at a low profile, mostly as assertions and punctuations, in the debate of rights and peace until 2007 when Insan developed a game on giving orientation to common citizens and rights activists about women's rights. Insan contacted women rights activists, trainers and researchers to add content to the game, especially from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Constitution of Pakistan. In the beginning of 2008, Insan had its comprehensive strategic review that resulted not only in structural change in the organization but also women's rights and gender came to the forefront. This was also important because of the increasing violence against women on the one hand and the policy discussions and legislative processes going on at the national level.

Child Development and Youth Leadership Program: Graduating Through the Years

But going back to the beginning of 2002 is important for Insan from another angle, when it also decided to diversify and involve educational institutions in its peace and rights education activism.

The need to involve schools was in recognition of the fact that they were natural allies and best positioned to effectively change the attitudes of the youth and communities toward children, working children, peace, and human rights, due to their specific role in society. This could also help Insan to "institutionalize" the struggle and thus make the efforts sustainable in financial and programmatic sense. This idea got further polished when Insan decided to make sports activities the entry point for developing partnership with schools and inculcating concepts like child rights, education, joyful learning and peace (in the regional context with India as a primary concern). It was thus the beginning of Child Development and Youth

Leadership Program in which sports, awareness, mobilization and activism became interconnected and made Insan the first organization in Pakistan which employed sports for social change.

Insan's "sports for change" started in the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP). At that time, NWFP had considerably attained national attention due to low literacy, lesser opportunities for sports and play available to the children and rising militancy especially in the context of 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror. Initially there was a resistance in communities towards sports, but volunteers did not give up unless parents themselves became part of the process. On the basis of this experience, Insan took its sports project to Quetta, Balochistan province, to mitigate the sufferings of the earthquake-hit population. Insan worked there for about two years till the communities, especially children were out of the trauma caused by the massive destruction and human casualties.

Insan designed its project for thirty educational institutions at Peshawar at the beginning in 2002. The schools were local and those of Afghan refugee communities. About 18,000 male and female students were involved in sports and orientation sessions on various issues, including child rights, peace, health and hygiene, etc. Volunteer coaches took different sessions, for example, on health and hygiene, hepatitis A, B and C, etc. Insan in fact trained a number of head-coaches for delivery of sports and health education sessions to volunteer coaches. The volunteer coaches delivered mini-lectures on selected issues and mentored male and female students' sports activities. During their play sessions, the students also learned how to respect their bodies and those of others, how to behave, how to treat minors and elders, how to take care of their sports facilities, etc. It is also important to note that special children were involved and made part of the mainstream sports and educational sessions too.

Before Insan partnered with schools, Afghan and local communities were against sports and used to discourage children from playing. Sports for girls were simply out of question due to the cultural barriers. But the mobilization by Insan's team and volunteers led to a level where even girls started playing with boys and schools continue to do the same practices even after one year of the formal closing of the project. And even some of the communities ask why Insan did not do the same program for them too.

When Insan was closing its funded work in NWFP in December 2008, there were eighteen schools formally working under the Child Development

and Youth Leadership Program. Due to the mobilization and close working relationship, there are at present twelve educational institutions (covering about 14,000 students) and one hundred fifty volunteers still working with Insan. On the basis of quality results, Insan is also planning to implement the same program in South Punjab province. Religious extremism and intolerance are rising as fallout of the military operation in NWFP and Balochistan and therefore conditions demand from Insan to continue to play its role as a member of civil society. Insan believes that sports are best means to wean children away from the culture of violence and extremism. Insan is currently in the process of identifying financial resources for a long-term project which should enable it to work in at least eighty formal schools and with estimated 40,000 male and female students, in rural and semi-urban areas.

Year 2007 was also important in the life of Insan. In this year, Insan wanted to groom *Mistree Natak* on professional grounds. Until then, *Mistree Natak* was purely a volunteer work, which gained immense support. In 2007, Insan hired a creative director to take care of *Natak* independently, developed a full-fledge office for it, bought equipment and the necessary gadgets, and earmarked budget so that volunteers were paid for their performances. Some new volunteers also joined. The idea was to enable *Natak* to run independently and start performing on request of other organizations that were willing to engage the group in helping them in raising awareness of various issues. That was where Insan miscalculated. When money came in, actors started pushing each other to get selected for the roles. Money became the focus of interest, especially of the new volunteers who were not on the same wavelength and did not carry the heritage. That was a time when the *Natak* team started developing differences and the differences took the form of irrevocable split. Before Insan's leadership could jump in to help the team resolve the issues, many volunteers had already left. Once the group was in disarray, Insan could not muster up the courage to design anything of the sort again.

Reflections: Institutional Development of Insan

While Insan was sad upon the demise of its cherished *Mistree Natak*, it still had to move on. It was time for a serious review of the past and to plan for future challenges. And the organization exerted its energies to keep the spirit of voluntarism. Child Development and Youth Leadership Program in

fact played a very central role in sustenance of the volunteer spirit. Though Insan is also currently running a women equality and gender mainstreaming program, and its researches and technical support to the government and civil society are now widely acknowledged, the Child Development and Youth Leadership Program is in fact the one that has given new horizons to Insan to explore. It provided the basis on which Insan is standing today.

The Child Development and Youth Leadership Program, through years of its existence in one form or the other, enabled Insan to recruit hundreds of volunteers. It was not possible to run the program at such a massive scale without voluntary support of teachers, coaches, communities and parents. It was not possible to shape the opinion of the children, youth and communities without the program. It has helped Insan in bringing about a constructive social change on the one hand and enhancing the role of the organization from delivery of services to technical support, capacity development and research on the other hand. It enabled the organization to work with many partner organizations across Pakistan and even India and Canada. Even today, it remains to be a common point of reference between Insan and the donors' community. On the basis of this program, Insan developed many educational materials, such as rights-orientation card games (on children and then women in later stages), story analysis exercises, street theater skits, training manuals, which it used for awareness and education. Insan developed different card games on Child Rights, Gender, and Human Rights. The card games involve a set of cards that contain different violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and CEDAW. Another set of cards contains the articles of the human rights instruments. This game is played in teams. There is a score sheet. Team A shows the cards of violations; Team B has to find the particular articles related to the violations. This card game is available in Urdu and Dari languages (for Afghans). See Annex A for the list of materials of Insan.

Today, Insan has support of project partners in all the four provinces of Pakistan. Insan is already known well in the social development circles. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), International Labor Organization (ILO), ActionAid, Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF), Right to Play (RTP), etc. have worked with Insan on these projects. In this sense, Insan is present in communities and has the support of volunteer groups, civil society organizations and donors. Insan is also working with

governments. Currently, Insan is engaged with the Afghan government, through Governor Jalalabad, on the “Sports for Change” program (the component of the program being run in Afghan refugee schools in NWFP).

Annex A

Insan Materials



Insan developed different card games on child rights, gender, and human rights.

One set of cards contains different violations of UDHR, CRC and CEDAW. While another set of cards contains the articles of the conventions. This game is played in teams. There is a score sheet. Team A shows the cards of violations, Team B finds the particular article related to the violation.

This card game is available in Urdu and Dari (for Afghans) languages.

Footsteps: Survival to Development Dynamics

National Research on Practical and Strategic Needs of Afghan Refugee Children

Health Manual

A Guide for Teachers on Health and Hygiene. It contains information about thirty-five common diseases along with play techniques as to how teachers can give health information through games.

This manual is in Dari language, developed for Afghan Refugees.

Environmental Scanning: Gender Sensitivity in Government Employment Sector-Punjab

This is the report on a survey of twenty-three districts and six Punjab provincial line departments including those responsible for health, local government & community development, services & general administration, education and, planning & development matters.

Peace and Smile: Sports Tournaments for Afghan Refugee and Pakistani children

Thematic Sports Tournaments for which children prepare different programs and speeches as well

Mouse Pad

Millennium Development Goals

WE CAN, WE MUST!

Sports for Social Change – Some Experiences

Success stories of social change through sports

