



Group Development Pakistan

Case Study

Engaging religious leaders to promote child rights to education and protection

Next to E-11 sector, in Islamabad, Group Development Pakistan (GDP) field officers approached the Madrassa Mufti with the objective to increase enrolment of children in non- formal education centers that had just been established. Several meetings and discussions were held between the madrassah committee and GDP staff. It transpired that, along with religious education, the madrassah mufti is now very keen to expand his curriculum and include countering Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE), Child Rights, WASH and Child Justice in its program. It was agreed that sessions for boys would be delivered by a male field officer in the Madrassa premises rather than in the NFE centre.

Meanwhile, girls from the Madrassa were encouraged to join the NFE centre (tents) after attending their religious education classes in the Madrassa. Child Rights and particularly CSAE were initially taboo subjects, but after several sensitization session with parents, community members and religious leaders, the mufti felt that teaching these self-protection knowledge and skills were crucial to keep children safe: this is a huge accomplishment. The mufti was keen for his teachers and a maulana from the community mosque to participate in the Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions delivered by JICA, in the last week of February 2020.

This pilot initiative may be replicated in other mosques belonging to the same religious group, known as a moderate group, and registered with governmental authorities. Such results highly contribute to promoting child protection (many cases of CSA take place in madrassahs), peace and tolerance, in a culture sensitive and peaceful manner.