



ENSURING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

HEALTH SCREENING AND PROVISION OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

REPORT - 2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01** Executive Summary
- 02** Background and Importance
Objective of the activity
- 03** Activity Process
 - Screening of Children
 - Diagnosis and Provision of Assistive Devices
- 05** Picture Gallery
- 07** Involvement of Parents
Appreciation for Teachers
Impact and Feedback
- 08** Conclusion



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Implementation Support Unit of the Directorate of Elementary and Secondary Education (ISU-DoE&SE) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with the technical and financial assistance of UNICEF, is implementing Education Cannot Wait's Multi-Year Resilience Program (ECW's MYRP) to enhance education access for vulnerable children in districts Peshawar, Kohat, and Manshera. In its second year, the program targets **250 public schools** in the host community of Afghan refugees, focusing on marginalized girls and boys. As part of MYRP, ISU-DoE&SE conducted the Health Screening and Provision of Assistive Devices initiative to ensure the inclusion of children with special needs. This initiative emphasizes providing assistive devices to students with visual, auditory, or mobility impairments, enhancing their educational development and social inclusion. Students with such impairments often face barriers to accessing education and participating fully in classroom activities. The Health Screening and Provision of Assistive Devices initiative successfully identified **301 students (168 Boys and 133 Girls)** needing assistance related to eyesight, hearing, or mobility. Spearheaded by ISU-DoE&SE, education authorities, audiologists, ophthalmologists, and UNICEF representatives, this initiative aims to create a more inclusive educational environment. The activity actively engaged parents and the community, ensuring they were informed about the screenings, outcomes, and assistance provided to their children. This involvement significantly contributed to the students' overall well-being, as evidenced by improved academic performance and increased confidence reported by the students. The initiative's success highlights the importance of addressing diverse learning needs within the education system. It underscores the positive impact of early identification and intervention for students with special needs, as well as the critical role of teachers and community engagement in creating a supportive and inclusive educational environment.



BACKGROUND AND IMPORTANCE

Students with visual, auditory, or mobility impairments often encounter barriers that hinder their access to education and full participation in classroom activities. For example, students with visual impairments may struggle to read textbooks or see the writing board. Similarly, students with auditory impairments may face difficulties in understanding verbal instructions or participating in discussions, necessitating hearing aids. Additionally, mobility-impaired students may encounter challenges in accessing classrooms located in buildings without ramps or elevators, and they may require mobility aids such as wheelchairs, crutches, or walkers. Under the auspices of ECW and with the technical and financial assistance of UNICEF, ISU-DoE&SE planned on conducting a Health Screening and Provision of Assistive Devices activity for children with special needs. Providing special-needs students with the necessary assistive devices and accommodations is essential for removing these barriers and enabling them to fully engage in their education. By equipping them with appropriate aids, such as glasses, hearing aids and mobility aids, we can significantly enhance their learning experience and contribute to their overall well-being.

OBJECTIVE OF THE ACTIVITY

The objective of the comprehensive Health Screening and Provision of Assistive Devices initiative was to identify students with special needs and provide them with tailored support through assistive devices. This initiative aimed to create a more inclusive educational environment and ensure that every child, regardless of their abilities, has equal opportunities to learn and succeed. By identifying students with special needs early on and providing them with the necessary assistive devices, the program sought to remove barriers to learning and enhance the educational experience for all students.



ACTIVITY PROCESS

SCREENING OF CHILDREN

Discussions among education authorities, audiologists, ophthalmologists, and UNICEF representatives led to the formulation of screening protocols for students identified by teachers from ECW's targeted schools. Subsequently, a dedicated team comprising of various health practitioners and ISU-DoE&SE staff conducted screenings in 250 ECW selected schools where students required assessment. The comprehensive screening covered multiple health domains, including vision, hearing, speech, physical abilities, and dermatological health. Students were meticulously evaluated for conditions such as visual impairments, ocular diseases, auditory challenges, otological disorders, dermatological conditions, and physical disabilities.



DIAGNOSIS AND PROVISION OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES

During the screening process in 3 targeted districts, a total of 671 students underwent evaluation, revealing that 301 students required assistance related to eyesight, hearing, or mobility. This number comprised of boys and girls both, emphasizing the significance of adopting an inclusive approach to address gender-specific needs. The provision of assistive devices included hearing aids, eyeglasses, wheelchairs, and other essential aids.

The distribution of assistive devices among the three districts is as follows:

District	Nature of Disability	No of Schools	No of students screened	No of student provided with assistive devices	Assistive Devices
Peshawar	Weak Eyesight	35	255	150 (Girls 53, Boys 102)	Glasses
	Hearing Loss	13	36	12 (Girls 2, Boys 10)	Hearing Aid
	Impaired Mobility	9	9	0	Wheel Chair
Kohat	Weak Eyesight	17	75	30 (Girls 8, Boys 22)	Glasses
	Hearing Loss	3	7	1 (Girl 1)	Hearing Aid
	Impaired Mobility	4	8	1 (Boy 1)	Wheel Chair
Mansehra	Weak Eyesight	22	250	107 (Girls 33, Boys 74)	Glasses
	Hearing Loss	9	15	0	Hearing Aid
	Impaired Mobility	9	16	0	Wheel Chair
TOTAL		121	671	301	



671

Children underwent comprehensive screening related to eyesight, hearing, or mobility



301

Inclusive of **168 Boys and 133 Girls** identified to requiring assistance related to eyesight, hearing, or mobility and provided the same

PICTURE GALLERY





INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

Engaging parents and the community in such activities is essential for their success. By involving parents, ISU-DoE&SE ensures that they are informed about the screenings, outcomes, and assistance provided to their children, which can lead to increased support at home and a more conducive learning environment. Additionally, community engagement helps raise awareness about the needs of students with special needs and sensitizes the public to the importance of inclusivity in education. The success of these activities is evident in the positive outcomes observed for students. Active involvement of parents and the community led to a more supportive environment for students, contributing significantly to their overall well-being. Moreover, the initiative helped raise awareness about the challenges faced by students with special needs, leading to increased sensitivity and understanding within the community. As a result, students with special needs are more likely to receive the support and assistance they require to thrive academically and socially.

APPRECIATION FOR TEACHERS

ISU-DoE&SE extends its heartfelt appreciation to the teachers who identified the children facing issues and played a pivotal role in facilitating their access to screening and assistance. Their dedication and commitment to their students' well-being are commendable. Sensitizing teachers to the needs of children with special needs is crucial, as they play a key role in the early identification and support of these children. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills, we can ensure that they are better able to meet the diverse needs of their students and create a more inclusive learning environment for all.

IMPACT AND FEEDBACK

The initiative received overwhelmingly positive feedback from both students and parents. Students reported significant improvements in academic performance and increased confidence as a result of the assistance received. Parents expressed deep gratitude for the support provided, noting the profound impact it had on their children's education and daily lives. Continuous monitoring and follow-up measures are essential to track the progress of students who received interventions. Further collaboration with local health authorities and community stakeholders can enhance the sustainability and impact of addressing similar health concerns.

CONCLUSION

Under the ECW's MYRP and with the technical and financial assistance of UNICEF, the Health Screening and Provision of Assistive Devices initiative implemented by ISU-DoE&SE successfully identified and supported students with special needs in Peshawar, Kohat, and Manshera districts. The collaborative efforts of education authorities, healthcare professionals, UNICEF, parents, and teachers contributed significantly to the initiative's success. Engaging parents and the community in these activities proved to be essential, as it ensured a supportive environment for the students and raised awareness about the needs of students with special needs. Sensitizing teachers to these needs also played a crucial role, as they were able to identify and support these students early on. The positive feedback received from both students and parents further underscores the impact of the initiative, with students reporting improved academic performance and increased confidence. This initiative highlights the importance of inclusive education and the need to address diverse learning needs within the education system to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn and succeed.



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☎ 091 9225400 - 091 2216624

✉ info@isudoekp.com.pk

🌐 www.isudoekp.com.pk

📍 Directorate of Elementary & Secondary Education, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, near Gov. Husnain Shareef Shaheed Higher Secondary School No 1, GT Road, Peshawar

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