

CASE STUDIES



TEACHER – Ghulam Nabi – “Teaching gives me satisfaction that cannot be purchased with money”



Breaking through barriers to achieve success is challenging. Especially when you are a person with disabilities. Because of my disabilities I had to work harder than others to become a teacher.

My name is Ghulam Nabi, I am 36 years old. My left arm is not fully developed, but I never let my disability overwhelm me, because I always believed that I am differently abled person with numerous qualities, Alhamdulillah!

Coming from a financially unstable and big family of 7, attainment of education was never easy. I decided to never lose hope and continued my fight to accomplish my dream. The first step towards it was completion of my matriculation at least, without which it would have been impossible for me to go towards my passion. Right after my matriculation, I got a job in a private school, Umeed Primary School, located in a remote village of Chunda in Skardu district, as a sweeper. Since teaching was my passion so I used to help students in their studies while doing my job. My interest and knowledge of education was noticed by the school management and therefore I was offered a position of assistant teacher in the same school.

This not only made me feel really appreciated and encouraged but was also a moment of extreme happiness for me. I promised myself and the management to work hard to fulfill their expectations and contributed at the best of my level in the role of a teacher.

Things changed once again when the school was not able to pay my salary due to limitations of funds at the school management level. Even though I was very disappointed but I chose to continue my teaching service to the school on voluntary basis for the future of those children. Teaching gives me satisfaction that cannot be purchased with money!! I was teaching in the same school for next ten months without any salary.

I did not lose hope believing that “With Allah it is late but not dark”. The thought and the hope, together helped me through the difficult times. When we believe in tomorrow's prosperity, we get the courage to endure today's hardships. My hopes and prayers were answered when Gaamzan project was implemented in Baltistan. Under the project, Alight and Moawin Foundation extended support to our school and adopted it.

It was only because of this project, that my monthly salary was resumed once again and I was not only appreciated for my efforts but also provided an opportunity to learn and grow. My motivation was tremendously increased, when the organization selected me along with other teachers for the capacity building workshop at PDCN Gilgit. This workshop helped me to get deeper understanding of classroom teaching practice and boosted my confidence level. I truly enjoyed the entire training session.

Today I can confidently say that this project gave me a chance to prove my abilities and provided means to develop my skills. I would really like to appreciate how the team provided a chance to people like me and boosted my confidence to play my role for the society. Perhaps it is a message to others that there is no barrier if the determination is strong. With encouragement, right opportunities and training, anyone can participate in different activities and play their positive part in society. I believe with the help of such support, one day I will be able to bring my family out of extreme poverty and lead them to a prosperous life ahead.

STUDENT – Mehwish Fatima – “My dreams are higher than the Himalayas and the Karakorum”



I am Mehwish Fatima. I grew up in Ghanche, a remote mountainous area of Gilgit-Baltistan. Living there without basic health and education facilities has been very difficult and the dream of getting better education seemed to me not less than climbing a peak.

We are twelve people living in a small house and my brother takes care of all of us by himself. He works on daily wages. Because of harsh weather conditions and limited transportation facility in the area my brother is hardly getting any work in winters. At such times we feel even more vulnerable and miserable, but still, my dreams are higher than the Himalayas and the Karakorum and they give me strength to face any challenges.

I obtained my primary education from an Urdu Medium School. My school was two hours away from home and I was walking for four hours a day.

I had a lot of questions and doubts regarding my dream of education. Sometimes I couldn't sleep for a whole night. I was always praying to Allah to bring me out of these difficulties. Almighty Allah heard me and launched Gaamzan project to help me out. In September 2019, Moawin Foundation under the project Gaamzan adopted my school, Model Middle School Bordas Balgahr Ganche, and upgrade it to 8th class. I'm studying in 7th class. Not only my fees is being paid through this program, but also I am provided with stationary as well. My happiness has no limit, because I can see my dreams come true.

I am very thankful to all who provided me an opportunity to continue my education for the fulfilment of my dreams. The joy I have is indescribable I am short of words to express my feelings.

SHELTER – Maliyar Bomal – A simple solution makes a big difference



A non-formal school was established in Maliyar Bomal, Skardu under the project Gaamzan. The school was provided with all basic school supplies and learning material however during the additional need assessment, it was observed that the children are were studying under a tree, due to unavailability of a room/space. Sometimes they had to endure scorching sun, at other times it was the rain that caused disturbance and the lessons had to be cancelled due to storms. A simple solution to the problem – a tent – made a big difference, as now the school children have a shelter, a roof over their head and protection from the weather.

Even during rainy days, community teachers run three classes a day in a big tent donated to school by Alight Pakistan. The attendance improved, also because the children do not get ill as often as they used to do when they sat in the open, and the enrollment increased from 43 to 63 students. The tent is also used as an exam hall now. Seeing the positive changes and increased enrollment rates the community already requested for another teacher.

The shelter was not only welcomed by the community but also contribution from the field was tremendous. The parents got involved in the installation, working for two days to prepare the ground and fix the tent. One of the locals, Haji Akbar Ali, said:

“We are grateful to Alight Pakistan for the cooperation for education, we have no words to describe the happiness. We are more than pleased to continue working with Alight Pakistan, as they are shaping our future generation giving them quality education. Thank you, Alight Pakistan and thank you to Alight's management team in Baltistan, who work with dedication to support our community. We are looking forward to future cooperation with the organization and we are willing to take any required steps to make sure our kids could get quality education.”



SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATION – Arando – Alight brought light to Arando



Arando is the last human settlement in Basha Valley, in the Shigar District of Baltistan. The village is about 120km from Skardu, only accessible by a very dangerous road. According to latest survey the village consist of 180 households and most of the local people work in agriculture. Because of heavy snowfall the whole valley is cut off from the rest of the world for almost 7 months of a year. Due to its isolation and limited connection the life in the valley is difficult and people have to do without some basic life facilities.

Alight Pakistan came to Arando to open a non-formal school for girls, as the village had the highest ratio of out of school girls in the Shigar District. When the Alight team arrived they observed that the villagers were still living without electricity and using traditional lighting tools to lit their houses. The non-formal school building had ventilation issues as it is common for houses in Arando to have small windows, to keep the interiors warm during harsh winter weather. It also meant that the classrooms were quite dark.

Some solution was needed and the Deputy Director for Education of Shigar, as well as the school teachers and community members, requested Alight's help. Alight installed a complete solar panel system with for the school, which not only helped its electricity issues but also provide a conducive learning environment for the students. The children can now easily work and learn inside the classroom, with the lights on.

The villagers are very happy to see electricity in their village for first time and the children are happy studying in well-lit classrooms.



SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GRADUATE – Benish – A source of hope and means of provision



I am Benish hailing from a remote village of Saltoro in district Ghanche. When I was 12 years old my house burnt down due to gas-stove leakage and half of my body got burnt. I also lost my parents in that accident. It was a very difficult experience that I went through in very early age.

I would like to get treatment of my burnt face but for that I have to earn money and I did not have any skills to do that. An advertisement of skill development program led by Alight Pakistan and AIOU in Skardu attracted my attention. I found that course suitable for me and applied for it. Luckily, I got admission in stitching and tailoring course.

With the blessing of Almighty Allah, I successfully completed the course and learnt all basic skills of tailoring. It was my dream to earn and get treatment of my face and I could see this dream turning into reality with the skill development training. I have started tailoring work on a sewing machine of my sister-in-law and earned a handsome amount from my work. The training made me very skillful and I am getting very positive feedbacks from my clients. Now, Alhamdulillah, I have enough clients and I feel very happy. For me the course was a source of hope and means of provision for my personal expenses. I am really grateful to Alight Pakistan team and AIOU for this great opportunity.

TEACHER – Fatima – The responsibility of the eldest daughter



I was brought up in poverty and life was hard in our remote mountain village. I witnessed people living in poor condition and dying because of lack of basic facilities. Due to lack of proper infrastructure attending school was not easy for me. However, my late father – a man with dynamic and inspirational personality, always encouraged and supported me in pursuing my education. Though he was an illiterate person himself, working as high-altitude porter who only had opportunity to make money in summers, he did everything for me and my siblings. Sadly, he left us so early.

Despite life's hardships and financial difficulties, I was optimistic about my education and availed every opportunity to achieve my goal. I pursued my primary education at a government school. After 5th grade, I continued education at home and appeared for matriculation examination as external student and passed it with distinction. I was the only girl from Miraliwa Public School who received matriculation certificate.

After matriculation, I took an entry test for teaching in Miraliwa Public School, which I cleared and got inducted as a teacher with the salary of 4500 rupees per month. It was the greatest achievement of my life. The job was harder than I expected, but it was not impossible, all it needed was dedication and commitment. Although it was not an easy, I never gave up. Being the eldest in my family I was responsible for eight family members. I had to support them after the death of my beloved father.

When the school was adopted under project Gaamzan, my salary was increased from 4500 to 10,000 rupees per. This increase was a blessing for me and my family as being an eldest daughter, I had to play the role of both brother and father at the same time.

In the previous salary, it was getting difficult for me to support my brother studies. However, now I was able to do that. Eventually this hard work paid off and my brother joined Pakistan Army. His dream came true and all thanks go to this intervention, which helped me and brother successfully take the first stepping stone to get out of hardships. I am optimistic that, just like me, other teachers, students and their families will benefit from the project in years ahead.

I was born and grew up in hardship, but remained resilient and eventually reached my aim. I think I have set an example for the women in my community, showing them that if you are determined and focused you can achieve your goal.

TEACHERS – Jagir Basin – The Family of Raja Mir Afzal Lambardar of Jagir Basin



In one of the remote areas of Gilgit District, upper Jagir Basin, live the semi-nomadic Gujars. Traditionally working as cattle farmers, these Gujar communities migrate between summer and winter pastures with their animals, earning hand to mouth livelihood. Due to poverty and this struggle to earn hand to mouth livelihood, education has been the least priority for them, nor did they have resources to pursue studies.

When Alight Pakistan and National Commission for Human Development teams came to the area and identified Ishpetdass as one of its potential villages, to establish a community school the biggest obstacle turned out to be lack of qualified people who could teach. There wasn't identified anyone available in the village with matriculation certificate who could act as a non-formal school teacher. And because of its remote location there was no teacher from neighboring villages ready to come to Ishpetdass to work there.

Unable to find a solution, Alight team contacted local leader – Raja Mir Afzal Lambardar (headman) of Jagir Basin, and requested his help. Raja Sahab – an influential man with great personality, was very excited about the prospect of providing access to education for out of school children of the region, especially the Gujar community. He assured to arrange a qualified teacher and asked Maria Bano, his daughter-in-law to take the responsibility if possible. Maria bano was working as a qualified teacher on a well-paid position in a private school then, however agreed to be part of this noble cause and left that job to join this school as Non-formal teacher. Since the distance from Maria's house and the village of Ishpetdass was about 5 km via rough road, Raja Mir Afzal provided his private car to take Maria from home to school and back.

This way finally a school for the Gujar Community of village Ishpetdass was established. Soon, another Gujar community from the village of Warza approached Alight's Gilgit team with a request for non-formal school in their village. And again, the problem of qualified teacher was found. This time Raja Sahab was part of the school founding team and realizing the situation, he assigned this noble task to his son Raja Naveed – a well-educated and successful businessman, who agreed to manage his time and serve as NFS teacher to this other school established in Warza.

With the help of these two schools, around 120 boys and girls of Gujar community, are part of a schooling system right now, who were previously unable to go to any school. The support of Raja Mir sb. in opening and running these two schools is tremendous as not only he extended support during its establishment but also encourages their son and daughter-in-law to continue their service irrespective of any challenges. Raja sb. and his wife take care of their granddaughter at home while Maria and Naveed continue teaching in non-formal schools. Naveed drops Maria at Ishpetdass and heads towards the school in Warza and they travel back home together. Communities of both villages are very happy, and their hearts are filled with hope for better future.

STUDENT – Muhammad Ali – “My dreams are no less than that of a prince”



I am Muhammad Ali and I am a student of class 10 at Bab-ul-Illam Public School Ranga in Skardu. I live in a small mud house with seven family members.

Being born to a poor family is fate. It's not a decision of any person. But my dreams are no less than that of a prince. I also want to get quality education in a private school with all facilities available.

I am well aware of how children of the rich families achieve success. I also know that they have to pay hefty fees at private schools. The standard of public schools in my area was deteriorating and it was not only difficult, but impossible for children from poor families like mine to study in a private school. They were beyond our approach.

I always considered my dreams unattainable but this project made me see hope when my school was adopted, it enabled us to chase our goals. Today there is no private school in my area, but a passion for pursuing quality education still exists. Access to quality education is ensured for needy and deserving students, the best example of which is the established Early Child Education center.

Another school of this standard cannot be found in the entire district. Even the renowned schools of this region are not providing this standard. In the past years I have learnt that for a better change in life, we have to stand strong with firm commitment and faith for a better future. Hope is a powerful force.

STUDENT – Dilshana Bano – “Finally, the day came when I found myself in school”

I am Dilshana Bano, aged 15. I belong to the deprived village of Thorenus Stak in Roundu. In my village we are lacking basic life facilities like health services, education and even clean drinking water. And the high illiteracy rate is the root of the problems, causing lack of progress. If this gets resolved all other social issue will be solved. Unfortunately, we did not have education facility in our village and because of that me and my friend didn't go to school.

It was my ultimate desire to be enrolled in a school and get best quality education. I expressed my thoughts to my parents but due to financial constraints and social norms I couldn't go out from my village for acquiring education. My father is the sole breadwinner of my whole family and now due to his old age he can hardly earn enough to ensure our survival.

Although I wasn't going to school I always tried to learn to read and write on my own to achieve my dream. Finally, the day came when I found myself in school. For that day I have waited for years. It became possible just because of Alight Pakistan. If they did not initiate a school here in my village I would grow old just dreaming on.

Now I am quite confident that the day will come when I would become the best teacher and will contribute to uplifting my region, particularly in the field of education.



STUDENT – Azra – “I have waited for that moment for 18 years”

My name is Azra. I am enrolled in non-formal school in Thorenous Stak, a far-flung village of Roundu District. I was born and raised in a lower-middle class family of seven members. We are five siblings and I am eldest among them. Because of limited resources and lack of basic educational facilities in the village I could not get education till the age of 18, even though it was my dream to get quality education and serve my nation in a best possible way. In my childhood my parents sent me to a nearby village for schooling but financial constraints forced me to leave school. That school was far from my village and my parents couldn't manage to arrange a van to take me to school. My parents' financial situation wasn't good enough for me to pursue education but I never gave up. I kept praying for better days to come and finally a ray of hope appeared when it seemed I will be able to fulfill my dream of acquiring knowledge. Alight Pakistan brought the light of education to my village – I have waited for that moment for 18 years. Alight brought hope for the future for me and my colleagues currently enrolled in non-formal school in Thorenous.

Alight Pakistan is enlightening the young people of my village. I am inspired by Alight's initiative of educating out of school children like me. Thanks to the care of this organization, today I am again in school and I aim to educate myself so that I can give back and contribute to the betterment of my region, where education is an uphill task for children from poor families. I would like to thank Alight Pakistan for their remarkable contribution in educating the children of deprived areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, especially my village of Thorenous.



SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM GRADUATES – Chuk Photuk Enterprises – Sustainable stitching



For three months, during cold snowy winter, a group of young women from Gilgit Baltistan would meet daily to learn sewing and stitching techniques under the guidance of a professional seamstress. Most of them had no previous experience of making clothes, as one of them said: “I didn’t even know how to hold scissors properly”, but with patience and dedication they gradually learnt the methods, developed the skills and gained confidence.

It was during those skill development sessions organized by Alight Pakistan and Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), that the women started planning their future. During their skill development sessions and counselling interaction with Alight and AIU team, the team decided to make the best use of their gained skills. They placed their heads together and came up with the idea of starting a cooperative sewing and stitching business. After all, there were not enough quality fashion sewing outlets in Gilgit town.

The women motivated each other and soon after graduating from the skill development program they started working on their business plan. They selected a committee from the literate agreed members among themselves to lead the process, chose the name and by the end of March 2021 the “Chuk Photuk” Enterprises was established.

“Chuk Photuk” means “sewing and stitching” in local Shina language. And besides stitching modern clothes and school uniforms that are largely in demand, the young entrepreneurs want to revive indigenous traditions of handicraft. The local handiwork used to be famous among locals and tourists visiting Gilgit. Unfortunately, the skill is gradually dying and these days it is extremely hard to find local art and craft pieces at the market in Gilgit. Chuk Photuk Enterprises will seek the help of local experts who still remember how to make traditional woolen pattu shawls, sweaters, socks and carpets, as well as bridal dresses, and in future include those products in their offer.

The women's start-up received support from the local government and some private sector organizations along with Alight Pakistan and AIU, who offered different kinds of supports including but limited to letting them use a building in Asif Market Khomer Gilgit, provision of some additional machinery, connecting them with market, helping them advertise their enterprise etc. The budding businesswomen from Gilgit are optimistic about the future of their business that already yearned income and empowered and motivated them to become self-sufficient. The first orders have been placed and the first money earned. We wish our graduates prosperity and growth in business. Good luck!

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT – M. Wasim – “It was the happiest day of my life”

M. Wasim is a bright, fifteen-year-old student of 10th class at Uswa Boys School. He belongs to a Kawardo village of Kharmang district – a rough terrain area without basic facilities. His family consists of ten members. His father is a retired army soldier earning twelve thousand rupees' salary per month. They moved to Skardu City for better education opportunities, and rented a room there.

“I always dreamed of becoming a doctor and for that I always strived to secure highest position in my class. When the pandemic started suddenly all the sources of earning money became limited and I felt that my dreams would shatter because my father was unable to submit the school fee. Due to COVID-19, my father could not do any other job. And school administration was calling for the submission of fee. I was thinking to discontinue my education to give some relief to my father. This was an extremely stressful situation for me, weakening me emotionally and physically. My father was also in a state of extreme depression. It seemed there was no one to help us out from this situation.

Then one day my father came and showed me advertisement for scholarship under Gaamzan project, which provided small grants to the most talented and deserving students. As I was topper of my school I had a great chance of getting that scholarship. So with hope and excitement in my heart I applied.

Finally, I received the call with great news that I have been short-listed for the scholarship. It was the happiest day of my life. My entire family is grateful to this project and all the people and organizations associated to it, for granting me a scholarship and helping us in hard time. This support made me more confident, optimistic, and enthusiastic for future. No doubt, the interventions of this kind is spreading hope and smiles in the remote villages of Baltistan.



SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT – Zarina Batool – “It was not less than a miracle for me”

Zarina Batool is a sixteen-year-old girl with exceptional talent. She is studying in class 9th of Uswa Girls Public School and College Skardu. She has one brother and three sisters. Her father is working as a security guard in a flour mill and he is the sole bread-winner of his family. Zarina and her family belong to a village of Kondos of Ghanche district. They moved to Skardu city in 2019 where they hired a small house on rent.

“I have always been at top position in my school since my childhood. I topped in Grade 8 board examination in Baltistan in 2020. The lack of medical facilities and suffering of people with bad health in my region in general and in my village in particular always motivated me to choose medical career. It was so difficult for me to continue my education as my other siblings were also studying in school and my father had no sound source of income. The illness of my mother and university fee of my brother already put extra burden on my father's shoulders. Because of that I was almost ready to discontinue my education. But I always prayed to Allah for some miracle to accomplish my dream. I started searching for scholarship because I was very keen to pursue my goals. Indeed, it was a very hard time for me.”

In 2021, a scholarship was advertised by Moawin Foundation in local newspapers and on social media pages for talented students with poor financial background. It was not less than a miracle for me to have been shortlisted for the scholarship.

This scholarship not only helped me in overcoming financial difficulties and lifting some burden from father's shoulders. It also boosted my morale and my confidence and made me more optimistic about achieving my goal. I am very thankful to the Moawin Foundation for taking such a great initiative for the students of the most deprived and deserving area of Baltistan.”



You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great

Teachers are one major source of learning for students in schools. Keeping in consideration the importance of a good and confident teacher, Alight not only focuses on providing and maintaining a safe and conducive learning environment at schools but also aims to capacitate the human resource engaged with it.

Alight under its continuous professional development program trained the teachers in three face-to-face phases, extended mentoring at field level through LMS and established a close connection with each one of them to bring out the best of them. These trainings help the teachers to improve their teaching skills and also in some cases help them to grow more confidently as well. Some such examples include of Muhammad Tahir from NFS-Banga-Diaram, Ms. Manzoor Ahmed from NFS-Usmanabad-Gilgit and many other like these. These teachers joined Alight as Non-Formal Schools and were amazing in their work at school level. However, there was lack of confidence which held them back in fully participating in their peer groups like teachers training etc.

The impact of these trainings at field level is definitely witnessed during every field visit however how these training impacted the confidence building of teachers have been observed even at the time of training. These trainings gave the teachers an opportunity to interact with each other, work in group and share ideas. Initially these teachers were reluctant to share views and participate actively in discussions. However, by the last day of training, the difference in their attitude was very much obvious. Not only this has been observed by Alight staff but also they shared their amazing learning experience by showing expression of gratitude to Alight for enhancing their respective skill and help them overcome their hesitation.

The trainer shared, "Muhammad Tahir was a shy and introverted person, and also language barriers were not letting him express his opinion, which was hindering his learning capabilities. During these trainings, we have engaged the participants in the practice and demonstration of various teaching methodologies through several activities. Tahir was also given the opportunity to talk and also to present in front of his fellows. The improvement in him was very evident by the end training and after two to three practices, he became confident enough to share his viewpoint and represent his group during the activities."

Manzoor shared, "I never attended such training sessions before. At first day of the training, I was hesitant to talk in front of the participants and give group presentations however the trainer motivated me to share my ideas and give presentations. Now I consider myself a confident teacher and can present my work to others without any fear and hesitation", he added, "This three-day training helped me to develop my confidence level. Gaamzan project gave teachers like me the assurance and taught us child-centred and activity based teaching methods".

The support and motivation by the facilitators helps the teachers to take an active part in the program and open up their minds even more to absorb all the learning. This way the teachers put extra effort in all learning sessions and stay more excited to practise the learning in their schools.



Light at the End of the Tunnel – Arando Village, Shigar District, Gilgit Baltistan - Pakistan



Located 140 kilometer from Skardu city, Arando village in Shigar district consists of 180 households having only boys' primary school. The village does not have any communication system nor it has the luxury of electricity, which makes it (Arando) the most deprived one in Baltistan region.

The valley stretches about 170 kilometer from Skardu to Askole and is the gateway to the high mountains of the Karakoram. The town of Shigar is the largest settlement in valley and largely an inaccessible place. It is a popular destination for hiking, trekking and mountains like the world's highest peak of K-2.

During winters, the region receives heavy snowfall, which makes the lives miserable for the residents of the village located at the bank of Shigar River in the most remote part of the region. The area remains cut off from the rest of the world sometimes for more than six months due to snowfall and road blockades by the snow avalanches.

The literacy mobilizers of Alight Pakistan identified the area, contacted with the community leaders and established village education committee for the establishment of non-formal school and girls enrollment in Arando village. It was due to the community mobilization efforts of the literacy mobilizers that the villagers agreed for the identification and enrollment of their out-of-school girls aged between 6-16 in the non-formal school.

It was the result of the dedicated efforts of the literacy mobilizers that the VEC members identified 80 out-of-school girls in the locality and got them enrolled in the non-formal school, for which the VEC identified space and a teacher.

As it was really difficult for one teacher to impart teaching and managing 80 girls in the non-formal school, the VEC members developed consensus and agreed to generate fund for the salary of another teacher.

"I want my daughter to study, work hard and become financially independent. Our generations of women have been illiterate as there was no educational facility for the girls. But, Alight has established a non-formal school for our girls," says Mehdi Ali Arando, adding that education can transform the lives of millions.

Mehdi Ali Arando said that his daughter always aspired to get education but we did not have had any facility in our village. "Now it is the time that our girls get education and become teachers, doctors, engineers and specialists in varied fields of life," says Mehdi Ali, adding that it is his aim to put his every effort for the quality education of his daughter.

A Tale of Determination – Haleema- Kharmang Valley, Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan

Ms. Haleema belongs to a low income family of a remote village in Kharmang Valley, which is one of the five main valleys of Gilgit Baltistan region. She lost her mother when she was young and was married at the age of 16. Unfortunately, within few months of her marriage, she got divorce from her husband. Of late, she moved from Kharmang and started living with her elder sister in Skardu.

As a grown up woman, she always dreamed of becoming financially independent through learning and improving a skill-set but somehow she could not get any opportunity to become successful in her life.

Meanwhile, she came to know that Alight Pakistan, in collaboration with Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has launched youth and adolescent skills development program under its Gaamzan Project in Gilgit, Hunza and Skardu districts. These programs were introduced in the wake of market survey and were relevant to the context considering emerging opportunities, particularly with regard to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative in the areas.

Haleema discussed with her sister and decided to enroll herself in the first batch (45 males, 45 females) of youths and adolescents in masonry & stitching courses for three months.

During the training course, she learnt all the basic concepts and mandatory skills to master the art of stitching. Now she has graduated and is desirous of replicating her skills by opening a stitching centre in Skardu. But the lack of financial resources is the stumbling block to fulfill her cherished dreams.

She was recognized as one of the most active and hardworking trainees enrolled in the stitching course. As to learn all complicated cutting and sewing skills in a short period of three months is really tough but her dedication and hard work made it possible.

"I am very thankful to Alight and its partners for establishing training centre for women. But, in the same vein, Alight and its partners must link the trainees to get financial help for the establishment of their own businesses," Ms. Haleema says.

She further said that there are a lot of philanthropic and microloans offering organizations in the country and Alight must connect the trainees with the (organizations) as majority of them cannot afford to buy the equipment and gadgets to set up their own businesses.

"Being a single woman and that too being dependent upon someone else is very difficult in our society. I have got the skill-set and can become an independent entrepreneur with a little bit of the financial support," Ms. Haleema says, adding that majority of the training course colleagues wanted to set up their own businesses but were faced with financial crunch.



Indefatigable Passion Committed to Promote Education – Nusrat Shaheen - Village Danyor, Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan

Village Danyor in Gilgit district is an underdeveloped area which lacks in basic facilities such as hospital, school or proper metalled roads. Communities income streams are low as their main source of earning is agriculture. However, the agricultural economy and resultantly the livelihoods of the communities in the area are mainly dependent upon the climatic conditions.

There is no educational facility in the village, which makes it really difficult for the children, particularly the girls, to get education as the public or private schools are in the periphery of over two kilometers from the village.

Besides distance, another major issue hindering the education of the children of Danyor village was the poor financial conditions of their parents as they could hardly meet their both ends meet.

In March 2020, Alight's Literacy Mobilizers visited village Danyor and found that local girl Nusrat Shaheen had been running an Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre with the support of her husband since 2019. Nusrat Shaheen wanted to enroll out-of-school children but her financial constraints hindered her aspirations. The Alight's LMs discussed the proposition to convert the ECD into a non-formal school and she agreed to the idea immediately.



A Village Education Committee (VEC) was formed, which identified the OOSC in the village in collaboration with National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) - the implementing partner of Alight. Through its donor Central Asia Institute, Alight has been helping more children and particularly girls to attend school while working with the government and local communities to create child-friendly schools in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Nusrat Shaheen, who holds a Graduate Degree, daily commutes on foot for over two kilometers from her village Danyor to teach around 25 boys and girls who have enrolled in the school. Nusrat Shaheen says that there is no public transport available but she is happy she is transforming the lives of the future generation. "I am really happy to teach the children in a safe, healthy environment, especially girls," she says, adding that Alight's Muallim Radio programme also proved to be very helpful in awareness creation about education among the local communities.

She says that she has been putting in sincere efforts to help students learn and develop their confidence, make schools happier and safer places for the children to learn. She says that she intends to avail of Alight's online teachers training programme to impart teaching to the students more effectively. Nusrat Shaheen says that she also meets with the women of the community and tells them how education can open up the world for their daughters by teaching them skills that will help them earn an income, avoid being exploited and encourage them to keep their daughters at school.

"Besides teaching, I have been actively encouraging communities to change their thinking about the value of educating girls as they are the future mothers," Nusrat Shaheen says, adding that school supplies for the children is also an excellent incentive as most of the communities' members hardly make both ends meet. She said that the communities are thankful to Alight and its partner NCHD for establishing educational facilities in their village.

Creating a Difference Converting Passion into Profession – Maria Bano - Village Jagir Baseen, Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan

Resident of the village Jagir Baseen in district Gilgit, Maria Bano, after completing her graduation wanted to contribute to the education of local children but did not have the requisite resources to do so. Her husband, Raja Naveed Iqbal, too wanted to see the children of the area get education and excel in life, but he too was compelled to stifle his dreams due to lack of resources to open and run a school.

In July 2020, Alight's Literacy Mobilizers visited the nearby villages of Ishpitdass Jagir Baseen and Farooqabad Warza Jagir Baseen for the establishment of non-formal schools as there was enough number of out-of-school children in both the villages.

Village Education Committees were formed in both the villages, which identified the OOSC in in collaboration with National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) - the implementing partner of Alight. Through its donor Central Asia Institute, Alight has been helping more children and particularly girls to attend school while working with the government and local communities to create child-friendly schools in Gilgit-Baltistan.

As there was no teacher available in both the villages, the LMs and VECs members were able to contact Maria Bano and her husband Raja Naveed Iqbal, who agreed to render their services to teach the children.

Maria Bano was appointed teacher in Ishpitdass Jagir Baseen and her husband Raja Naveed Iqbal was appointed teacher in Farooqabad Warza Jagir Baseen. Ishpitdass Jagir Baseen and Farooqabad Warza Jagir Baseen are located in different directions (about two to three kilometer) of Jagir Baseen -- the native village of Maria Bano and her husband Raja Naveed Iqbal.

But, once both the schools were established and OOSC enrolled, the distance could not diminish the spirits of both the spouses. Raja Naveed Iqbal daily provides pick and drop services to his wife to Ishpitdass Jagir Baseen and besides regularly imparting teaching to the students in Farooqabad Warza Jagir Baseen. There are about 70 children who have been enrolled in various grades in Ishpitdass Jagir Baseen.

Maria is very hardworking and exuberant teacher, who completed her Master's Degree during her job. Maria and her husband are quartering her all their efforts to uplift the lives of children of the area through provision of quality education. Whatever the contingencies encountered by them, their passion has helped overcome them.

Sometimes landslides block the roads but they manage to reach their respective schools on feet so that the children do not suffer any educational loss. Besides teaching to the children, Maria also helps the local community females to get learning.

"We want to see the children of our area get education. Our communities have little financial resources but these non-formal schools are no less than a blessing for their children," Maria and her husband say, adding that Alight, its donors and implementing partners are transforming the lives of hundreds of thousands of the children in one of the most difficult regions of Pakistan.



Transforming Dream into Reality A Blessing in Disguise –Nusrat Fatima - District Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan

Resident of Wahdat Colony Safdarabad in District Skardu, Nusrat Fatima wishfully dreamed of establishing a school in order to the educational needs of the children of the area. But her family's poor financial conditions proved a stumbling block to transform her dream into reality.

Originally hailing from Gilgit where she taught as Vice Principal in a private school for several years, Nusrat Fatima moved to Wahdat Colony Safdarabad after her marriage. "Soon after my relocation, my passion for teaching increased manifold as I saw more children not getting education due to poverty," Nusrat Fatima says, adding that the government-run schools are situated far away from the locality while the locals cannot afford to pay for educational expenses of their children in private schools.

In July 2020, Nusrat Fatima came to know about Alight Pakistan's initiative of establishing non-formal schools for the out-of-school children. She contacted Alight's Literacy Mobilizers who visited Wahdat Colony Safdarabad for the establishment of non-formal school as there were enough out-of-school children.

A Village Education Committee was formed, which identified the OOSC in in collaboration with National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) - the implementing partner of Alight. Through its donor Central Asia Institute, Alight has been helping more children and particularly girls to attend school while working with the government and local communities to create child-friendly schools in Gilgit and Skardu.

Nusrat Fatima grabbed the opportunity with both hands as Alight offered her necessary support for the establishment of a non-formal school in the area. It was due to her and Village Education Committee efforts, as many as 56 out-of-school boys and girls enrolled in the school within short span of time.

"It is no less than a miracle. I always wanted to establish a school for children but did not have the financial resources," says Nusrat Fatima, adding that teaching has been her passion.

She went on to say that most of the people in the area belong to the labour class and they have very scarce financial resources to support education of their children. "The daily wagers make ends meet with difficulty. They cannot save money from their earnings to meet the schooling expenses of their children," Nusrat Fatima says, adding that most of the children could not get education as poverty forced them into working and minion jobs at tender age.

"I have no other objective but to impart teaching to the children of the area. Now the locals are happily willing to send their children to school as it does not cost any additional expenses," Nusrat Fatima says.

Nusrat Fatima visits the areas adjacent to the school and convince the parents to send their children to school where they get free books, uniforms, bags and stationery.



A word of appreciation from Department of Education of Shigar District

The reflection of efforts by Alight team in expanding access to education to far flung areas of Baltistan has been collected and presented below. During discussions with multiple education department key people, not only appreciations have been received but also requests for new locations have been submitted.

Some words of appreciation received are given below, which provides a bigger picture of Alights success in selection of NFS locations and ongoing key activities.

'Our district - Shigar, is known for its beauty. Ever since the independence of Pakistan, Shigar Valley has welcomed domestic and international tourism, and has been especially popular among adventure lovers. Yet despite its obvious attraction and wealth of natural resources, the district is lacking development and lags behind in the field of education as compared to the other districts of the region.

The district of Shigar encompasses two main valleys: Basha and Braldo. Both valleys lack infrastructure and basic facilities, mainly due to the remoteness of the villages and lack of proper road infrastructure. District Shigar has the highest rate of out of school children in Baltistan region and therefore is challenging for organizations to work in these remote areas due to difficult access. Alight Pakistan has been recognized by the community as one major INGO which reached these locations and worked to provide education to the children from the most underdeveloped villages of Shigar District. Alight Pakistan established non-formal schools in Thoshow, Bianco, Arando, Arando ghond, Tastay, and few other villages.

Department of Education Shigar and National Commission for Human Development have fully supported Alight throughout the process of establishing the non-formal schools. Here at the Department of Education we greatly appreciate the efforts of Alight Pakistan in educating the children from far-flung areas of Shigar. Representatives of Department of Education are in close liaison with the Alight Baltistan team to ensure quality education in every established school.

Considering how successful Alight Pakistan was in their project of establishing non formal schools, the Department of Education requests more NFS to be opened in further locations. We also request for teachers to be provided and trained for our own schools wherever needed. Our appreciation is manifested in the written application to Alight Baltistan to extend its services to more areas'



All the little things that make school a school

One of the main obstacles preventing children from getting education is poverty. Even when school itself is free, many parents do not enroll their children just because of the affordability of related expenses such as schoolbooks, uniforms and stationery. At other times, the lack of basic facilities at schools, hold back the parents from enrolling their children. Therefore, while planning intervention for Out of School Children especially at community level, it is very important to make sure that the children have safe and conducive learning environment at school, which sometimes starts from something as simple as providing a tent for the shelter of children.

In Arando, located at Basha Valley, Alight Pakistan established a non-formal school, which had space issues. The community provided a small room and open location where classes were commencing however the building was not enough spacious and sitting in open air was not convenient especially in extreme weather conditions. This was affecting the learning pace of the children therefore Alight team not only arranged shelter for this school but also provided them with solar-powered facility and provided all the students with school bags, textbooks and exercise books, and basic stationery. These interventions and support extended by Alight made a huge difference in children's enrolment rate, as it motivated both parents and students to come to school. Parents were satisfied with the arrangements for their children education and confident, that the little ones would be safe at school, including the girls. And the children were excited and eager to study using the materials provided by Alight. The quality of education also improved as teachers did not have to worry anymore about the weather disrupting the classes and they had proper books and exercise books to support the teaching and learning.



Education – it's all about access – Manzoor

We are all equal as humans, but each of us needs different kind of provision in order to fulfil their potential. What's no more than a bother to some, might be a serious challenge to others. Equity is about making sure that everyone gets support they need, so that everyone has equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.

Meet Manzoor Hussain a 12-year boy from Monjing, a remote village in Braldo Valley Shigar Baltistan, who got enrolled in NFS Monjing. Irrespective of all the physical challenges in life and trouble in walking, his thirst of knowledge is very powerful. He got enrolled in NFS Monjing in October 2020 before that he hasn't had the opportunity to get Education, as till last year there was no School in this Village so most of the children were out-of- School like Manzoor or had to walk miles to reach the school.

It was not possible for Manzoor to walk because of his paralyzed body and his father brought him to School daily in locally manufactured handcart. It was really tough but the spirit for learning become a source for motivation. The feedback of Alight NFS Teacher about Manzoor has been very good as well reflecting his active participation in class and immense interest in studies.

In order to make it a little convenient for Manzoor, Alight arranged for a wheelchair for him which was handed over to him in August 2021. This small contribution has left a huge impact on the life of Manzoor as his hurdle of coming to school daily has been minimized. Not only his father and family members are a little relieved but also their determination to send him to school and continue his studies has been increased.



Education within reach

In the remote mountainous regions of Gilgit Baltistan, travel from one village to the other may be perilous, especially in winter season when heavy snowfall makes the roads obstructed. Those children who can attend a school in their village might consider themselves lucky. For many others, journey to a school in a neighboring village is impossible and they remain unschooled. Unless and until they get their chance at pursuing education where they live.

In 2020 Alight Pakistan opened several non-formal schools in the far-flung settlements of Gilgit Baltistan enabling out of school children to join school for the first time in their lives. Among such students is Syed Akbar Ali. This is what he told us about his experience of getting enrolled at school:

“I always had high interest in school and in learning, but my parents did not want to send me to the school located in nearby village. But when Alight has established a school here the teacher came to our home and mobilized our parents. Now by the grace of Allah and sincere effort of teachers and Alight staff I am studying in NFS Syedabad. My teacher motivated me to work hard and also made us aware of the importance of education. Because of all support I received from my teachers and parents I am among the best performing students in the school”.



It takes a village... - the Story of Ghulam Hussain, Literacy Mobilizer

When Ghulam Hussain, Alight's senior literacy mobilizer, arrived in Tastay village, he found more than hundred out-of-school children, most of them girls. Tastay is one of the most remote settlements in Braldo valley, on the fringes of Karakorum. Until recently, there was no educational institution for girls here and this was considered the main reason why so many girls from the village were not studying. Once Alight Pakistan opened a non-formal school in Tastay, 56 students got enrolled and started attending the school. But still many girls stayed at home occupied by domestic work. Many parents did not consider girls' education important and preferred to keep their daughters secluded at home.

It required much effort from Ghulam Hussain to convince the villagers that their girls would benefit from learning how to read and write and count. He held many meetings, discussed things over with School Management Committee, spoke to the teachers and motivated the community members to bring their daughters in school. After his intervention 21 more students got enrolled.

"In my recent field visit I met newly enrolled children's and analyzed their progress" says Ghulam Hussain. "I found that the children were very sharp and intelligent and did well in schoolwork and other extracurricular activities. I asked the students for the reasons why they were not enrolled in school earlier they said that their parents are still unaware of importance and usability of education, that's why they did not send them to schools. It was through the efforts of teachers and SMC members who motivated their parents that they got opportunity to study and nourish their young minds, to have better future".



Small girl with big dreams

Can a small girl become a role model for her community? It turns out she can. Meet Khairoo, an 8-year-old girl from Arando, who dreamt of becoming the best student in the class long before she got a chance to go to school. Arando is a remote village in Basha Valley, located some 135 km from Skardu. Due to heavy snowfall the whole valley is cut off for almost 7-months a year and lack of basic facilities, such as electricity, makes life here very hard.

Before Alight Pakistan opened a non-formal school in Arando there were no educational facilities available for local children. The literacy rate for girls was below 10% percent. Children like Khairoo used to spend their days helping their parents in agricultural activities and household chores. When Khairoo got admission in school she even didn't know how to read or write but she was very motivated to learn. She was also very keen to take part in extra-curricular activities.

In recent examination Khairoo got first position in her class and received her first reward for excellent academic results. Community members praised her performance and arranged an event of award giving ceremony at school. The celebration of Khairoo's success proved to be a great incentive for many parents to enrol their out of school children. After the event the enrolment rates spiked. And now the literacy rate among girls in the village has increased to above 50%.



Developing the right strategy

As each child is unique they need a unique approach to help them achieve their full potential. Imran, a 3rd- grader from non-formal school established by Alight in Maliyar, Skardu, struggled with his studies for a long time. Mr. Muslim, the teacher, was very worried about his poor performance and put much effort to help Imran, giving him extra time and support.

Mr. Muslim also called Imran's father to school to discuss Imran's problems and try to find the solutions. Imran's father revealed his interest in running households' activities, which keeps him to pay more attention to education and homework. Here how Mr. Muslim handled the situation is a true example of creativity and finding success through it. Muslim didn't lose hope and got determined to observe Imran's interests more keenly to devise the most useful teaching methodologies. He accompanied Imran for few days to see what the boy does, what are his interests and how he spends time doing his everyday outdoor activities.

Using the observations made during these visits, Muslim redesigned the tasks for Imran to make them more interesting and integrated education with his daily life activities to sustain his interest in education. This approach made a huge difference and within a month the teacher observed improvement in Imran's academic performance and attitude. Seeing that the new tactic worked, Mr. Muslim encouraged the boy to do even more and always appreciated his achievement. And when Imran started performing well in school his parents also took more interest in their son's studies and supported him more.

Within few months Imran has become the highest performer in his class and his success inspired his colleagues. And his parents are really grateful to the teacher for that initial support and extra care, that made a real difference in boy's life.

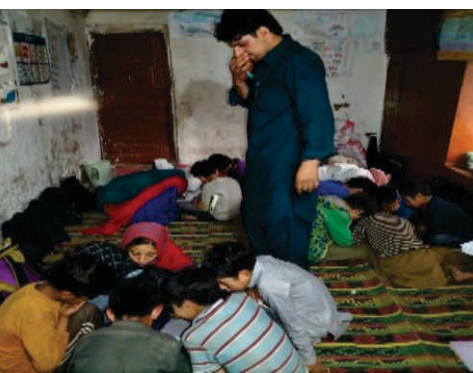


Teachers are change-makers

Shonal, one of the most beautiful village in Basha Valley, is located about 96 km of Skardu. It is not easy to reach Shonal, as the mountainous road is in very bad condition and in winter snowfall cuts off the access to the valley. Last year the Alight Pakistan team reached the village while surveying the situation of education in the valley. The whole region was found to have a very low literacy rate and the urge to study was also observed very low due to the engagement of community in livelihood and household chores.

To begin with, the school was struggling to attract more students as the need of more determination and close connection with students and community was needed to develop that interest level. Keeping in mind the need of school, replacement of old teacher was considered and the hiring of new teacher changed everything. When Muhammad Sajjad joined as new NFS teacher, his dedication and competence changed the school and very soon there was an increase in the number of students by 35%.

Muhammad Sajjad trained with British Council and attended teachers' training organized by Alight Pakistan. He is a devoted and enthusiastic teacher, engaging his students in activity-based learning, and motivating them to achieve their best. The parents and the whole community of Shonal have trust and confidence in their teacher and are happy to send their children to study under his guidance. They know that Muhammad Sajjad shares their goal of seeing the children of Shonal grow and succeed.



A precious contribution towards education

Community involvement – or lack of it – is of utmost importance. Even a great project can fail if the community does not approve or endorse it. And any help from the community members can help the program thrive.

Khartolat is a village in Goherabad. With the help of Alight Pakistan, the out of school children from local area are now enrolled in non-formal school. There are twenty-three girls and twenty boys attending the school run by Ms Ghazala – the teacher. But there is yet another person whose efforts greatly contributed to school's success. It is Ms. Mainaz, who volunteers in the school as a teaching assistant.

Ms. Mainaz has completed her FA and is now helping children from her village get education they need. She is also helping school staff to enrol new students. She is dedicating her time and energy to make sure the local children can study, and she does it all just for the sake of her community, without receiving any salary from either the government or the project budget. It is very brave of her to give her precious time to educate children and she is a role model for her community. It is through the efforts of people such as Ms. Mainaz that communities grow, and children get a chance to succeed.



Doing it for the girls – a literacy mobilizer's story

"I am Farzana Sajjad and I work for Alight Pakistan as Literacy Mobilizer. I belong to Goharabad – a remote area of Diamer.

I have done my master's degree in Political Sciences and Bachelor of Education Degree from Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), and I have also completed Associate Degree in Education from Education College, Gilgit.

Here in Diamer District many people have limited access to education, and it is especially hard for girls to get educated. The attitude of local people towards female education is very negative. When I came to know about Alight Pakistan's intervention for out of school children in Diamer I got very excited. I thought it is a great opportunity for my community.

One day, Alight Pakistan team visited our village Khartolet Goharabad to identify local schools and out of school children. They visited my hamlet, and I was interviewed about the situation of female education in the area. After some time, Alight team approached me and asked me to open non-formal school (NFS) for the out of school girls. I agreed to open such school at my home.

However, opening a non-formal school for girls was not an easy task. I have arranged meetings with community elders and religious elders to persuade them to give permission to their daughters to get enrolled in our school. It took much time and effort, but after a series of meetings and mobilization sessions with the parents of young girls, they have agreed to send their daughters to Alight's NFS. This was first private education initiative in our hamlet.

Initially there were 20 girls who took admission in Alight's NFS, later on 10 more girls joined. I am happy that those young girls are getting education and 12 of them have successfully completed grade 8th. They are now in process of admission to AIU for grade 9th.

After sometimes, Alight Pakistan announced a position for female literacy mobilizers. I have applied for the position and got the opportunity to serve my community. As female literacy mobilizer I have to take care for 5 non-formal schools of Goharababd Diamer.

Travelling to my schools is not easy, because the village roads are in bad condition and it's a mountainous terrain. Daily I spent 3 to 4 hours travelling to reach 5 schools. I give pedagogical support to teachers and also conduct Menstruation Hygiene Management (MHM) awareness session for young girls and mothers, about which I got focused training from my female staff members in Alight. I also run mobilization session with the male elders of the community. It is not easy, but I feel happy for young girls to be able to go to school."



Doing it together

Diامر District has the lowest literacy rate in Gilgit-Baltistan region and provincial government declared the situation as an education emergency. The reasons for this situation are complex, but the solutions are there, and this story from Thurly Batai proves that change is possible.

Thurly Batai is a remote settlement in Chilas, Diامر, located approximately 30 km from the main road. Until recently the local community had no access to education as there was no government school within the radius of 15 km. It would take an hour and a half to reach the nearest school and because of the distance most parents couldn't send their children to school. Over 90% of the local children were out of school and the community gave up on the idea of getting their children educated due to lack of facilities and the difficult economic circumstances.



Alight Pakistan reached Thurly Batai while on their mission to bring out of school children to school. Alight's team members knocked on local doors and spoke personally to the villagers to motivate them to do something about their children's education and to help them understand the need for and importance of basic education. The campaign proved successful and the community joined in the efforts to open a school. Mr. Abdul Shukoor has donated his house to non-formal school teacher Abdul Basit with the sole intention of helping to educate every child of his village and community.

The joint efforts of Alight Pakistan and local community resulted in the enrolment of almost 60% of the children, who had no previous education. And the enrolment drive is still on – with Mr Abdul Shukoor actively participating in the campaign. People of the community are appreciating the school arrangements and are very happy with the educational material and tools provided by Alight Pakistan so far, including a shelter tent for the children.

Fixing the broken puzzles

13-year-old Nazira is a student at non-formal school in KIU Khari established by Alight Pakistan in 2019. She enjoys going to school and playing with her friends. She has learnt to read and write and responds with confidence to her teachers.

But just a couple of years earlier Nazira was shy and quiet. The traumatic experience of losing her father, who died in service of Pakistan Army, and the subsequent dramatic changes in the girl's life took a toll on Nazira's mental and emotional health.

Nazira and her family belong to the village of Kwardo in Baltistan. But after her father died and her mother remarried, Nazira moved to KIU Khari, in Gilgit, to live with her aunt. It wasn't easy to adjust to life without parents and in a new place, and the girl became very withdrawn – she wasn't taking interest in any activities and avoided playing or interacting with other children.

When Alight Pakistan opened a non-formal school in KIU Khari Nazira's aunt admitted her children. She used to come to school to drop and pick her children and Nazira would accompany her. The teacher at NFS KIU Khari, Ms Abida, noticed the shy girl who frequently came by the school with her aunt and motivated her to come to school as a student. She also convinced her aunt that it will be beneficial for the child.



Initially, Nazira was very reserved and did not participate in any activity or classroom discussion. She used to sit in the classroom as a passive listener. However, Ms. Abida's continuous efforts and enthusiasm helped the girl gain confidence. Slowly and gradually, she started taking part in activities and interacting with other students. The focus, appreciation and dedication of NFS teacher is helping Nazira to step out of her shy zone and look at the outer world more confidently. Now she is a keen student aspiring to follow her father's footsteps and join Pakistan Army to serve her country in the future.

Bridging the gap towards education | Finding Solutions

Uzair son of Nazim Hussain is a student of class 6th at non-formal elementary school in Paribangla, Mirabad, in Juglot District. He used to attend public school in Paribangla, but because of his special needs he could not continue his studies there.

Uzair suffers from hemophilia – an inherited disorder in which blood does not clot. Any minor accident can be very dangerous to him. He requires extra care and attention. Uzair is under specialist care and needs to go to see doctors regularly, which results in frequent absences from school. This, combined with the problem of injuries during play with other students, made it impossible for Uzair to attend public school.

Uzair is a bright child, and he takes great interest in his studies. And while he was unable to attend government school, he was fortunate to find a school that could cater to his specific needs and support his learning. Not far from Uzair's home there is a non-formal school established by Alight Pakistan. Non-formals schools, also known as community schools, offer greater flexibility and are a better choice for those students who for various reasons cannot attend mainstream educational institutions.

Uzair is now a student at NFS Paribangla and he follows a learning regime designed especially for him. Often, he stays at home to study and the teacher, Owais Ahmed, visits him to support and supervise his progress. Sometimes, Uzair visits his teacher at school to talk to him. And whenever the boy comes to school, teacher give him extra time and attention and other children are instructed to play with Uzair carefully during breaks.

Mr Owais Ahmed says that Uzair is very intelligent and takes interest in his studies. Uzair's parents are also happy with the teacher and the school. According to the parents the school is perfect for Uzair as it offers more flexibility and the teacher doesn't force, but rather encourage the boy in his studies, and he stays motivated to learn. When he grows up Uzair wants to become a doctor.



It always seems impossible until it's done

This is the story of a community effort for education as told by Ms. Gultasira, the teacher at Harpandas Non-Formal School in Chillas. The school that catered for some 120 students was initially managed by a single teacher and it used a single room in a house of a community member, Mr Murtaza. To begin with, Alight Pakistan had to provide the school with all necessary stationery. But after few months, the school management stopped asking for more materials. Ms Gultasira explains what happened to the school.

“The community is now helping a lot. All the people got united to support the school and each week they donate some amount of money according to their financial ability. It is due to efforts of Alight Pakistan that the attitude of local people towards the school changed so much.

When we first visited the school, we gathered all the parents, teachers, School Management Committee members and related Alight staff, and we talked how the whole area could act as one community to help run the school along with Alight team. We could do it ourselves, without depending on someone's help. We discussed how education and common effort for school could help build a strong community and create a good, educated and helpful society. The parents were very helpful, kind and considerate towards such noble cause.

Compared to other schools in Chillas region, ours had the largest number of students. It was difficult to accommodate them in a single room. Mr. Murtaza, in whose house we used to study, is a man of great wisdom and kind heart. He is a government servant with a mere salary of Rs. 25k - 30k per month. He is head of a large family and has to feed his many children. But he was so generous as to donate his whole home to Alight so that children of his village could get education and excel in life and serve the society. He didn't want anyone to be deprived of basic education as he was deprived in his young age due to poor economic conditions and no concept of education in the region. He donated his house out of a pure heart for education for the sake of Allah Almighty. We want more kind, selfless people like him in the world so that our world could become better place.

The new school building has many rooms for classrooms and proper sanitary facilities like multiple number of washrooms. These were now available on previous campus. Alight Pakistan supplied the school with basic things like furniture, books, charts etc. But the whole community is now also helping not only in terms of financial support, but also ensuring that all the children from our remote area get a chance to study at Alight's NFS.

The school opening in our village has spurred an enormous change in the community. It has not only contributed to spreading education, but also changing people's minds and perception towards education and it facilitated society building efforts. People learned how they can act together to develop their community and not solely depend on others or wait for government to do something. Alight has been successful in their mission of educating young minds but also in bringing a societal change – something that was deemed impossible became a reality.



Educate Every Girl for a Better & Bright Future

Rashida Batool resident of Village Bianco, a very far-flung area of Braldo in district Shigar, belongs to a destitute family. She was happily studying in a government school situated a little far away from her house. What a stroke of luck that she turned nine, and her family extricated her from school as they believe that girls should not study beyond a certain age. Attitudes regarding girls' education vary significantly across different communities. Rashida was ignorant and did not know that her fortune was robbed mercilessly. As of that time, her eyes were not familiarized with the dreams, and she was unaware that they will not be fetched without education. Therefore, she was convinced, that education is not for girls and failed her interest. Things were going well with her, and a day came when Alight Pakistan established its non-formal school for marginalized and deprived people of her area. The Alight team visited them many times from the day of opening to the date when she herself learned that something is missing in her life. During the hunt, she started chasing the children of our non-formal school, which was nearby her place. While this struggle, she found the meaning of her life, which awakened the thirst for education in her heart and she approached Fida Ali. She was afraid that this dream of her getting education will again be not accomplished as she knew that her parents would not be able to afford the finances for her education. When Mr. Fida told her that Alight is an organization working for out-of-school children since 2020, and the non-formal schools are for those who cannot afford or access education and hindering to excel further. His words uplifted her, and she started convincing her family and finally succeeded to get enrolled in the school. Now she has got her smile back as she is going to school and replenishing her urge for learning and growing day by day. Wholeheartedly, she shows her gratitude to Alight and CAI for bringing joy and a feeling of accomplishment in her life.



Where there is a will there's a way

In the suburbs of Gilgit Baltistan, there are a number of pockets, which are deprived from the facility of education. The idea of school and education is like a fantasy for the people living in these locations. The road to that dream is far away with many hurdles, especially for girls, leaving them with no hope and less courage to start their journey towards education. Ansari Muhallah is one of those areas situated a little far away from main Skardu District. Education is a mere dream because there is no school around that locality, leaving a number of children out of school. Where Alight Pakistan has been working in establishing new non-formal schools across Gilgit Baltistan, another alternate and innovative learning initiative was launched by Alight back in 2021 in the name of Mobile School. Mobile School is nothing but a moving vehicle enriched with different books, and all the necessary learning materials to keep the children interested, motivated and to promote activity-based learning. This school doesn't only provide the readers an opportunity to have access to hundreds of story books but also attain learning using innovative tools like LED, Radio, flashcards, Education kits, Education mats and other interactive learning material. With the collaboration of NCHD, Government Education Department, Alight selected several communities where this mobile van serves as a mobile school. Ansari Muhallah is one of those communities, having current enrollment of 30 students in it (20 males and 10 are females). Every potential location is being visited by this Mobile School four times a month. The primary focus of this facility is to give OOSC an understanding of basic concepts and to equip them with skills so they may get the chance to excel in other fields of life.



The motivation to such initiatives come from girls like Fatima, who is merely nine years old and belongs to an impoverished family located in Ansari Muhallah. She was always very keen to go to school like other children. But could not materialize her dream due to financial restraints and the absence of school around her place. Her parents were worried but helpless, as they couldn't help their girl to accomplish her dreams. One fine morning, when the mobile school reached her place, that was like a miracle in life. An open-eye imagination of Fatima was there, in reality. After the glimpse, she forgot to blink her eyes as her silent prayers were answered in the form of mobile school. A beam of light emerged in her quiet and murky life. When the team of Alight Pakistan came to their Village intending to lighten young hearts with education, Fatima and her parents got excited and enrolled her in the school. Fatima and her parents are very thankful to Alight Pakistan and CAI for providing a chance to learn at their doorstep. After continued visits and support from the mobile van facilitator now she is performing very well in both academic and co-curricular activities.

