

2011 AusAID Scholarships Tracer Study - Pakistan

November 2011

[Public document \(Executive Summary, Key Findings and Discussion\)](#)

Executive Summary

The Pakistan Scholarships Program is an AusAID funded program which enables Pakistani citizens to undertake studies at higher education institutions in Australia. The program aims to respond to the need for sustainable, pro-poor service delivery and governance in line with the country's development priorities. This is being achieved through building the technical and leadership capacity of men and women working in federal and provincial governments, non-profit civil society and the private sector.

The Scope of Services (SOS) and Project Design Document (PDD) mandate the application of a tracer study to capture information on scholarship outcomes for a range of individual awardees in Pakistan. The main objectives of the tracer study are to:

- capture information on scholarship outcomes in terms of benefits to individuals, organizations and the community, at large, for a predetermined cohort of scholars;
- evaluate how alumni have contributed to human resource needs in their particular fields, organisations, institutions or groups and how the ADS, CTCP, APSP, CMU-AusAID and ASLP programs have contributed to strengthen HR capacity by providing valuable knowledge, skills and qualifications in key target areas;
- evaluate how a well-educated public as well as private sector cadre have fostered and sustained Australia's relationship with Pakistan;
- document and assess the relevant people-to-people and institution-to-institution links developed through the program within Pakistan and Australia; and
- evaluate the extent to which these scholarship programs were successful in helping address Pakistan's development, educational and research needs.

The tracer study, initiated in February 2011, involved an email based survey supplemented by a series of focus groups and twelve individual interviews. Survey responses were validated through professional referees nominated by respondents. The focus groups were designed to explore particular issues arising from the survey and were conducted with a group of private sector alumni, alumni in a private university, alumni from state universities, and alumni in a government authority (the State Bank of Pakistan). Interviews were conducted with four public sector government alumni, two university based alumni, one working for a multilateral organisation, one working on an USAID funded development project, and four working for NGOs. Six were male and six were female. Two were working in Baluchistan and two were in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with the remainder in the Islamabad Capital Territory, Sindh and Punjab.

A total of 168 responses were received representing a response rate of 69%. In general, earlier parts of the survey were more fully answered than later sections reflecting the length of the survey instrument. Three previously uncontactable alumni were included in the survey. Despite attempts to trace other uncontactable alumni through more recent alumni this proved largely fruitless. Therefore, little is known about the 72 alumni since their return. The inability to include a greater number of these alumni limits the understanding that can be gained about contributions of alumni from earlier years of the program.

Key Findings

- While it is assumed that some of the uncontactable alumni are overseas, it appears that in recent years the majority of alumni have chosen to remain in Pakistan and, of the nine per cent who were overseas during this study most are likely to return in the future.

- 90% of alumni are in employment and those who are not, expect to be employed within the next 12 months. Many alumni, particularly public sector alumni, return to their previous organisations while almost all take six months or less to find employment. At least 60% of alumni report that they are in jobs relevant to their study, although figures are lower for alumni in the public sector.
- 40% of respondents were women closely matching the percentage of women in the alumni population but they were found to be disproportionately working in the NGO/Multilateral sector and to a lesser extent in the private sector. Only 26% of public sector respondents were women compared to 63% of NGO multilateral respondents. This has implications for scholarship outcomes, for example, women appear to have more difficulty than men in finding employment since fewer have guaranteed jobs to return to, unlike most public sector respondents.
- Reflecting previous program priorities 68% of respondents said that they had made contributions to governance, however, many alumni have also made contributions that match current development priorities including: education (46%), rural development and food security (43%) maternal, neonatal and child health (34%). Other development related contributions included: Water resources and Climate change issues, Gender and Human Rights, Counter Insurgency and Transnational Crime Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building, Communicable Diseases Prevention, and Child Protection.
- Almost half of all respondents provided specific examples of contributions they have made to their organisations or to Pakistan development in general including 45% who had made contributions to policy development, 27% who had made pro-poor contributions, and 23% who made contributions in the form of advocacy, along with a wide range of other significant professional contributions (47%).
- While not a specified objective for either former or the current scholarship program in Pakistan, few instances of organisational links to Australia were identified and alumni involvement in these links, where they do exist, is limited. There is a greater level of people to people links but even these are relatively low level. The absence of a working alumni organisation in the past is assumed to be one of the contributing factors for this situation and appears to be being addressed by the current ADS management team.
- A particularly strong finding of the study was that almost all alumni have returned with strongly positive impressions and memories of living and studying in Australia and that they remain positively disposed towards Australia in general after their return.
- Many of private sector scholars now work for multinational companies. Their Australian studies have been pivotal in them securing these positions not only because of the subjects they studied and technical skills they developed but also because of the cross-cultural and interpersonal skills developed in Australia.

Discussion

Public sector awardees, in theory, have a better chance of affecting such changes. This is particularly so if they are selected in the priority provinces or engaged in agencies involved in the priority sectors. However, this study shows there are serious constraints to impact within Pakistani government departments. In particular, there is little recognition of the value of overseas education in public service human resource management regimes. Alumni are not routinely placed where they can best

utilise the skills and knowledge they gained in Australia and having an Australian qualification does not assist a public sector alumni to rise to positions of influence. Unless these constraints can be addressed in some way, much of the investment in scholarships public sector awardees will be wasted. It is worth noting that these constraints apply not only to AusAID but to all donors and indeed to any scholarships the Government of Pakistan funds itself. Recommendation 1; Given these shared interests it may be worth starting a multi-donor dialogue to see what solutions can be found.

From the three case study groups, it is apparent that the NGO group is by far having the most development impact largely by virtue of the fact that this is the sort of work they do. They are the ones most engaged in pro-poor activities. They are the ones that work in the most remote locations. They are also; it appears from the survey data, the ones that employ the majority of female alumni. Recommendation 2; Given the small size of the Pakistan program there would seem to be a strong case for better targeting of awards with an increased allocation of scholarships for alumni working in the NGO sector. Recommendation 3; There would also appear to be a case for engaging with a small number of organisations working in the priority sectors and in the priority provinces to build a pipeline of applicants for future years. These need not be NGOs but a precondition for inclusion should include a commitment to employ the alumnus in a job relevant to their study on return. Encouraging women applicants in some provinces presents particular challenges and this approach would allow the program to engage with organisations such as the Taaleem Foundation in Baluchistan and the Women’s University in Baluchistan¹ and channel potential candidates into the application process over a number of years. Such an approach is unlikely to lead to large numbers of applicants but it is likely to lead to the right type of applicants to make the sorts of contributions that AusAID seeks.

Another group worthy of further consideration are individuals working in universities. Given the Higher Education Regulation mandating that all university lecturers must have at least a master’s degree by 2015, there is likely to be a serious demand for high quality candidates in universities. Recommendation 4; AusAID could select only from amongst those lecturers working in its priority sectors and universities in its priority provinces, but again a commitment from the university to re-employ them in the same areas after graduation should be a pre-condition. From university staff there is likely to be a rising demand not just for masters scholarships but also for PhD’s. In a university context this makes sense both from an educational perspective and also because a PhD appears to be a pre-requisite for moving into a management role where the alumnus can exercise wider influence over teaching programs and junior staff. Given the cost of PhDs and the small number of awards available in ADS Pakistan, increasing the availability of PhD awards is a difficult trade-off but it is probably worth considering for highly competent university applicants on a case-by-case basis².

Even links between other alumni are not particularly strong and within the program, as a whole, no examples of alumni cooperation were uncovered even in organisations where there were a number of alumni. The absence of a working alumni association in the past may be one of the contributing factors for this. Other limitations such as the distance from Australia and the absence of many Australian companies and organisations active in Pakistan are some of the constraints. Recommendation 5; Any increase in the number and effectiveness of such linkages is going to require further investments and program enhancements through programs such as, internships as part of alumni study programs and linkage support programs to help alumni initiate cooperative programs.

¹ The author is indebted to ADS alumnus Ms Jamil for identifying these examples.

² Anecdotally, the author was told that a foreign Masters degree will not be accepted for PhD entry in Pakistan.