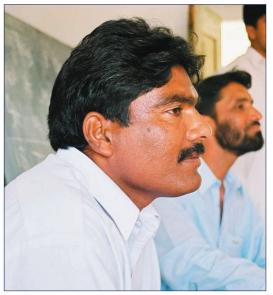# Teacher Puts an End to Punishment in Class



Photo: USAID/PakistanOmayma Khan

"Training has taught me to value the importance of the individual, and how everyone's learning curve is different.  My classroom has become democratic. I even learn from them [his students]. I love that my students are happy to be in my class."

- Shafqat Shah, primary school teacher

Beating children is a common method for enforcing rules and punishment for poor learning in Pakistan's government-run schools.  The teachers dispense this type of punishment, the parents condone it, and the children expect it.  Shafqat Shah, a primary school teacher at a small school near Islamabad, was shocked to learn through a USAID-sponsored program that if a child didn't understand something, it wasn't the child's fault, but the fault of the teaching methodology being used.  Shafqat had believed that if the child didn't understand after repeated teaching, then obviously there was something wrong with the child.

Shah's school was selected as one of 118 partner schools to participate in the USAID-sponsored training program. He learned that the traditional system of learning was not working.  Studying and memorizing was not enough.  Children have different learning curves and it is up to the teacher to determine each child's level of learning.  For this, a good teacher-student relationship is vital along with a positive learning environment.

Now Shah is applying the techniques he learned from the USAID program to improving his teaching.  The overall change in the children at the school after teachers participated in the training was so visible and immediate, that more parents from the community are now sending their children to school.  Shah looks back regretfully at the many times he punished children during his eleven years of teaching.  However, Shah is now very proud of his students' new enthusiasm for learning and interest in school due to his new approach to teaching.

First Person