



# BINTE MALAKAND SCHOOLS EVALUATION

For SOMOP

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## Introduction

### Evolution of Binte Malakand

Bint-e-Malakand (BM) has been working in the development sector since 1996. It was formed by a group of local women who wanted to promote education, create livelihood opportunities for the marginalized communities, particularly women, eliminate child labour in the area and protect the natural environment. Bint-e-Malakand works in the education sector, women empowerment, economic development and natural resource management in KPK.

In the early years of its establishment, Bint-e-Malakand worked in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province in general and particularly in the remote areas of Swat, Shangla, Buner, Kohistan, Swabi and all Malakand divisions. The organisation implemented several projects in partnership with local CBOs and communities in all the districts mentioned above. BM introduced several interventions in the area such as primary education for poor female children, adult literacy, skill building of rural women for enterprise development, and social mobilization of community-based organisations for the female and poor population who depend on natural resources for their Livelihood. BM undertook most of these interventions during 2002 – 2007, in collaboration with another local NGO named Rahbar.

The target groups of the organisation included poor families, women and children living in difficult circumstances and poor communities. The organisation has strong links with education department in districts of Malakand Division as it has run projects in those districts, particularly during the militant insurgency in 2009-10. BM is a part of the local coordination network and a member of HomeNet Pakistan.

The genesis of BM was to play a vital role in children's education in rural Malakand. This has been done earlier on through the opening of low-cost primary schools in the Malakand district, the establishment of non-formal education centres which include adult literacy and numeracy among women and awareness raising in the communities. Currently, Bint-e Malakand has reduced itself to focus on running three schools in three villages of Malakand (Alladand, Dargai and Matkani) with approximately 460 students, most of which are girls. The schools utilise the government curriculum and examination system but with significant flexibility in entry standards and school hours. This allows older children to still join and takes into account the agricultural season. Bint-e Malakand also supports mother associations, comprised of mothers of children who attend the schools, and provides them with vocational training.

In 2007, the small Dutch foundation SOMOP, the Stichting Ondersteuning Meisjesonderwijs Pakistan (Foundation Supporting Girls' Education Pakistan) was founded to support the education of girls in Pakistan, especially from underprivileged families. From the beginning of its existence, SOMOP has specifically supported Binte-e-Malakand, with the foundation being by far Bint's most important donor. SOMOP's mission is to provide girls from poor households in Pakistan with educational opportunities. SOMOP's board consists of six persons based in the Netherlands with different professional backgrounds. The foundation is run voluntarily, which means 100% of the raised funds are directly used for the projects.

SOMOP's core activity is supporting Bint-e Malakand in the running of non-formal primary schools. From SOMOP's regular annual financial support, the rent of the school buildings, school utility bills, salaries of the teachers and some teaching materials are paid for. SOMOP has also occasionally funded other things for the schools, including training of teachers, scarfs and sweaters for students, furniture, TV screens, school libraries, black and whiteboards, watercoolers and floor mats. On rare occasions, SOMOP has given money at Fatima's request for things other than education, such as food parcels during the flood and corona crisis.

As of today, BM's main focus is limited to providing free-of-cost education to children, specifically girls from low-income families in district Malakand. At the moment it does not run any project financed by other donors. The NGO still enjoys a good reputation and network, however, like in the beginning when it was founded, its core business is to run schools for girls.

## Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

The evaluation of the activities implemented by Bint-e Malakand with support from SOMOP was carried out to use the findings for jointly reflecting on SOMOP's future approach and how it can make the largest positive impact on the project.

The study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the education and activities provided at Bint e Malakand schools; The strengths and weaknesses of Bint-e Malakand schools from a social aspect; Comparison of the three Bint-e Malakand schools with the existing government schools (for girls or both boys and girls) in the area; Positive and negative aspects of Bint-e Malakand as an organisation; Possible improvements in Bint-e Malakand in the coming years; The prospects and challenges for the of Binte schools over the next five to ten years; and suggestions for SOMOP in relation Bint-e Malakand.

## Methodology

The study was conducted through the following step-by-step methodology:

1. Review of existing documents
2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders including:
  - a. Fatima Bibi – the head of Binte Malakand
  - b. Mr. Fazl e Subhan, Assistant District Education Officer (ADEO) Malakand, School Education Department, Government of KP
  - c. Mr Khursheed, Focal Person Education for All, Government of KP (currently Director of Higher Education)
  - d. Dr. Arjumand Nizami, Country Director Helvetas
3. Focus Group Discussions with the parents. Three FGDs were held with mothers, one each in the three schools. In Dheri Aladan, also held a discussion with three elders (men) from the community.
4. Focus Group Discussions with the Teachers. One FGD was held in each school, involving all the available teachers (mostly 4-5 in each)
5. Visit to the three Binte Malakand Schools
6. Observation and examination of school buildings and facilities.
7. Review of teaching material
8. Classroom observation, and discussion with the students



## Evaluation Findings

### Effectiveness of the education and activities provided at Binte Malakand schools

#### The competence of the teachers

Teachers fulfil the minimum requirement of primary teachers as per government regulations. Given the overall weaknesses of the education system in Pakistan, Binte teachers are not at par but close to the legal and academic requirements of the delivery of primary education. The majority of the teachers do possess the minimum educational qualification required to be a primary teacher, though they may not possess professional certification in teaching. This gap is filled through teacher training programmes organised for these teachers. Given the fact that over 5 million children in Pakistan are out of school, the government encourages all kinds of initiatives (by private, and civil society) to help primary education. Once the children are exposed to primary education, their chances to move on to the next level are higher – and the risk of a highly illiterate population is minimised. In Pakistan, literate is defined as people who can read, write, and sign their names. School dropouts are not always the fault of children, parents, or their poverty. It is also because most local schools cannot find local teachers. Teachers (especially female teachers) from outside usually never stay in remote locations due to multiple factors (cultural, security, low salary) and thus several schools end up as ghost schools. To overcome this, the government encourages that teachers, even if they are relatively low in teaching qualification, to be local so that they continue to serve schools and their likelihood to quit service is low. Binte has been forward-looking since its inception by introducing local teachers to begin the schools, but in parallel invest in their capacity development from time to time with the help of its network and SOMOP. Most recent training events include:

1. 2015 training – school management (SOMOP) – Education department and privately engaged trainers (15 teachers).
2. 2021 – organised by the Education Department. (SOMOP) - (14 teachers).

#### The degree of (successful) progression of pupils to further education

Children in general are taking a lot of interest in education. Most are punctual and are keen to attend school regularly. Most of the parents are also interested and aware.

The children are examined by the office of the Education District Officer (EDO) – female. The annual reports and interviews with the ADEO suggest that 100% of children pass their exams. That was endorsed by the DDEO, who mentioned it during the interview.

Since the year 2009, 1010 girls passed primary education from Binte Schools. This is a significant contribution.

School pass-outs after primary education:

Matkani (2002 – 2022) = 436

Alladand (2003 - 2022) = 676

Dargai (2019 – 2022) = 85

Their quality of exams and ability to solve required questions for all subjects is high. Their core weaknesses are spoken skills in language (Urdu spoken, English). It was evident by the fact that Urdu and to some extent English reading was acceptable, but articulation skills were higher in Pushto. However, according to the standards of primary education, the government encourages the delivery of primary education in the native language (Pushto in this case) and it is the secondary stage when English and Urdu are focused as a medium of delivering education and articulation skills improve drastically.

### **The children's views on the schools and suggestions**

During the evaluation exercise, I visited all the classes in three existing schools and asked the children about their views on the school, and the quality of education. All the students expressed their satisfaction with the existing education being imparted to them by Binte Malakand schools. This was verified by the way of greeting by students and through random questions to the students.

A low dropout rate is also a reflection if children are happy at Bint schools or not. According to annual reports and interviews with Fatima and the teachers, the dropout rate is surprisingly low in Bint schools. If there are some dropouts in Bint schools, those are due to:

- Migration of the family from the village
- In the case of boys, the pupil got admission to the formal boys school

## **The strengths and weaknesses of Bint-e Malakand schools from a social aspect**

### **Position of Bint-e Malakand and the Bint schools in the communities**

The first and foremost attribute of Bint schools is the trust of communities. In a tribal environment, where the trend to educate girls was non-existent and girls were noticed as only commodities to settle debts taken by tenant families by serving as servants, Bint has broken the status quo by pulling in girls to schools. So Bint is not just a lifeline for providing education to "labour" children, but to promote the idea of girls' schools in remote and harsh social environments. This trust has been easy to win because the initiators of schools are local and from within the tribal community with a respectful image following the tribal code of behaviour (even their clothing, ethos and relationship building). Trust was important in bringing children to schools in the 90s. BM has been able to win the trust of locals and now based on BM's reputation, people are happy to send their girls to the BM schools, as stated by community elders during a group discussion with them. On top of this, however, it is educational aspects due to which local communities appreciate Bint schools. Children are able to perform, they pass exams, are confident, and are different in personality in terms of self-esteem. While discussing with the community elders and parents, they posed full confidence and trust in Bint Schools.

### **Bint's economic and social support of families**

1. **Bint also runs a community mother programme.** The philosophy is to provide opportunities to women for income generation so that economic pressure on families reduces to some extent and children attend Bint schools. This component, however, is heavily under-financed. In 20 years, Bint only received hardly two or three actions from donors to fund income generation. The rest is done through Bint's coordinator Fatima and Philanthropist Dr. Arjumand Nizami's personal sources.

2. As indicated in the ToRs, off and on extraordinary support was provided to Bint by SOMOP and Helvetas (the organisation that is headed by Arjumand) in emergencies such as the earthquake in 2005, floods in 2010, floods in 2016, COVID emergency, floods 2022. In addition, some of the local leaders give packages for distribution (these are mobilized by Fatima).
3. **Economic support to Children in schools.** Free books have been provided by the Education Department from the years 1998 to 2023 – however, limited in number. The remaining books are bought by Bint, some very rare education support actions financed by Strengthening Participatory Organisations (SPO) in 2004 providing school material, and capacity development of schools. No external support from any donor on education was provided by Bint after this. Donation of toys, and books collected by children of better-off school children from urban areas. On one occasion, used furniture was donated by Lahore Grammar School located in Peshawar to Bint in 2008-2009 year.
4. **Social support.** One project was financed for developing non-timber forest products as an income generation activity from 2004 to 2005 by the International Development Research Centre – mothers' groups were engaged. Gender Empower Programme – financed women activists in skill development for income generation from 2004 to 2007. From 2007 till 2014 Malakand suffered militancy and insurgency due to which international donor support dwindled. In 2014 British financed project supported all Parent-teacher councils in training male and female parents of children.

## Comparison of the three Bint-e Malakand schools with the existing government schools in the area

### Difference in distance, transport, transport costs and safety

This depends on residential location – Bint schools usually support the population in far-off hamlets which are away from government schools which are mostly in village centres. In mountains, the distance by km is not the right yardstick. Most hamlets are steep. Even a distance of 500 meters in a hilly area is hard for children, and especially it is tough when we look at the local norms and culture where girls are not even allowed to go out of their homes.

### Difference in (flexible) admission policy regarding age

Bint schools accept students between the ages of 5 to 15 years whereas government schools accommodate children between 4-6 years at the time of first admission.

### The attractive incentives that encourage parents to enrol their children in Binte schools

Some of the incentives to attract out-of-school children to Bint Schools (as verified by parents during FGDs) include:

- Bint Schools do not charge any type of fee from students, whereas private schools of similar or even lesser level charge fees.
- unlimited relaxation in age limits, children of any age who have missed formal schooling can get admission to these schools.
- children feel interested and have no fears of being beaten up by teachers, something that the government has been trying to address in recent years. There are regular motivational ads on TV not to beat children in schools.



- personalised attention especially for girls who miss school due to personal issues (e.g. thalassemia or disability-affected girls),
- uniforms and shoes are provided to the students by Bint e Malakand. If it is not possible, the students are free to attend school in any dress, so that the parents are not burdened to buy uniforms.

### **Possible other factors that play a role in parents' choice of a Bint school over a government school**

Mothers in Bint schools can engage in discussions with teachers. Teachers pay attention to mothers – let them understand how their child is doing in the class, whereas in government schools teachers have no time (and attitude to talk) to parents; it is too official for them. Most often parents trying to get their child to the government school, say they have no space, or they find it too competitive.

## **Positive and negative aspects of Bint-e Malakand as an organisation**

### **The organisation's current structure and management**

There is a general body of Bint which is supposed to meet regularly but could not meet in 3 years since COVID. The general body has 103 members and 11 executive body members. Fatima is not very happy with the general body and executive body since they hardly have time and interest to work. Fatima thinks that these bodies need to be reconstituted to only bring the most interested and committed people who agree with the mission of Bint. Some of the general body members joined thinking that Bint as NGO will be a rich organisation and will have a lot of funds. Since 2018 there is no dedicated building of Bint due to no funds. Now it is Fatima, three volunteers: A finance person, program manager and education coordinator (training) and two social organizers - all are part-time and are called on a need basis. Before 2018 Bint had some financial support through small projects that they could have a small office to operate from. The general body was not willing to let Fatima step down. But now they are flexible to look into other options as long as Binte Malakand is there.

### **The organisation's capacity, management and sustainability**

For managing three to 10 schools, Bint has the capacity to manage the program. This is based on the confidence of the Bint team that they can manage even when three schools become ten. The team seems very dedicated.

### **The future succession of Fatima as head of Bint**

Salma, the education coordinator, who is a distant relative of Fatima, is regularly engaged in Bint. She is from Alladand village and acquired an MSc and M-Phil in Chemistry from Malakand University. She may find a job but she is still committed to keeping Bint to life and continuing to support. In addition, the program manager is soon to retire from government and committed to Bint for many years. As an indicator, Salma and one of the teachers Samina will be account signatories. Fatima will become the approving authority. This will change Bint from individual management to segregation of roles.

## **The role and involvement of women and mother associations in the organisation**

Teachers are engaged in the management of Bint, and they have formed an informal Community-Based Organisation named “Ujala Welfare Organisation”. The executive body also includes mothers of the school children. Mother’s Association provides voluntary support when needed. In school management mothers support a lot. Fatima is thinking of initiating a bank account for each school where the president of the mother association is a signatory with one teacher. This decision is pending approval of the general body.

## **Possible improvements in Bint-e Malakand in the coming years**

### **The quality of education**

Continuous support from EDO is key to maintaining the quality of education, coupled with a regular supply of books and stationery, improved extra-curricular activities (e.g. games), visiting teachers giving lectures if EDO can cooperate (or volunteers – like Dr Arjumand has been doing it)

### **The competence of teachers**

Teachers are highly motivated, and they feel pride in their profession, They are local and feel local responsibility for their children. However, there was a general dissatisfaction over the salaries being paid to teachers. They are getting salaries between Pak Rupees 7000 to 12000 which is quite low compared to government schools and other private schools. It is important to offer them appropriate salaries to retain their interest.

### **The buildings and teaching materials**

Government school buildings are extremely delapidated, affected by earthquakes and floods. Most have no boundary wall. Classrooms are drastically less than required. These buildings are not safe for running schools. Government schools also suffer corrupting resources which come for the improvement of schools. Bint rented buildings are structurally safe – all have boundary walls, toilets, and water. Even though these buildings are humble and do not have enough classrooms it obliges teachers to ensure good classroom management. One of the three schools has desk seating; two schools have floor seating.

Bint needs to seek options of buying or building their own school structures so that they are self-sufficient and need not worry about rentals and fear of vacating the building by landlords. Replenishment of material needs to be sooner than it is now - colours, stationery, blackboards need to be replaced.

### **Status of libraries and their usage**

The libraries exist – there is no dedicated room but there are designated cupboards/shelves for books and children read books during break. Books are not allowed to be taken home. Every school has one LED screen which is used for teaching languages and stories through USB.

### **New activities for Bint-e Malakand to improve access to education as well as educational results of girls from underprivileged families**

- Replace furniture and mats regularly since we cannot expect that donated material can be reused for years. Bint replaces sometimes through 2<sup>nd</sup> hand material.

- They need more teachers to improve the student-teacher ratio. This is important since BM is looking for new students, and as the number of students is increasing, we need more teachers to provide quality education. Binte needs to have a paid staff for cleaning (at the moment this is organised by the mother association).
- Sports material may be a good idea to improve cognitive energy among children (board games, badminton rackets).
- first-aid kit and teachers' training is needed.

## **The prospects and challenges for the Binte schools over the next five to ten years**

### **The position of the three schools in the coming five years**

Looking at the history of BM, and the highly cumbersome procedures involved in the establishment of new government primary schools, it is quite likely that BM will not only continue the functioning of the current schools but also establish new schools in the area in addition to existing 3 schools. They have in fact identified an unserved area for a new potential school where they plan to start the school soon.

### **Possible ways of further development for Binte Malakand concerning their educational role**

All the schools established by Binte Malakand are and had been primary schools. It was highly recommended by the parents that the schools should be upgraded to at least middle level so that their children, especially girls can continue their education beyond primary level.

Director of Higher Education and Focal Person Education for All in KP stated that it is next to impossible to establish a new government school in any area. In such circumstances, NGOs like Binte Malakand must continue sharing the government's responsibility of bringing in left-out children to the schools.

Until now Binte Malakand has established and running its schools in rented buildings. This is sometimes problematic as they have to vacate the building and shift the school which results in some dropouts. It was suggested by parents and teachers that if Binte Malakand can afford to acquire their own building, the schools may be run without fear of rentals or the possibility of moving out/ shifting, and will be more sustainable.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### SOMOP's relation with Binte Malakand

- SOMOP has been providing funds to Binte Malakand on regular bases, which is acknowledged and commended by the organisation as well as the beneficiaries. However, to improve the quality of education and cover more geographic areas, it is recommended that the flow of funds be made more generous and more frequent.
- Some provision may be made for an increase in the teachers' salaries in order to retain their interest in providing quality education to the students.
- Number of teachers also needs to be increased to have a good student-teacher ratio.
- A one-time budget may be generated and provided to Binte Malakand for the purchase of land and construction of school buildings so that the schools are more stable and sustainable.
- Upgradation of existing schools to middle level so that the students may continue their education at least up to middle level. Once they pass the middle level, they may be capable of studying on their own and taking matriculation exams. This will help out-of-school children, especially girls to complete their education up to matric level.
- Replace furniture and mats on a regular basis since we cannot expect that donated material can be reused for years. Binte replaces sometimes through 2<sup>nd</sup> hand material.
- Binte needs to have a paid staff for cleaning (at the moment this is organised by the mother association).
- The provision of sports materials may be a good idea to improve cognitive energy among children (board games, badminton rackets),
- Provision of first-aid kits in the schools
- Teachers' training is a continuous phenomenon, sessions may be organised to equip and re-equip the teachers in cognitive skills, multigrade teaching etc.
- Strengthening of Binte Malakand as an organisation is important for enhancing its role in the education sector in the region. Some provisions for capacity building of BM staff in organisational development will help improve its functioning.

### As a donor of girl's education in the region in a broader sense

- There is a huge gap in the demand and provision of educational facilities especially for girls in the Malakand and generally in the whole of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Director of Higher Education and Focal Person Education for All in KP stated that it is next to impossible to establish a new government school in any area. In such circumstances, it is very important that NGOs like Binte Malakand continue sharing the government's responsibility of bringing out-of-school children to schools. SOMOP may generate more funds from the West and invest in girls' education in KP.
- BM should have a functional and active governing body, reducing the reliance on a single person i.e. Fatima. Her commitment and zeal are no doubt exceptional, but it is always recommended as a best practice to include more active persons on the organisation's Board. The Board should hold its regular meetings at least twice a year, elect the office bearers on rotation, and play an active role in the policy matters of BM.
- The BM should maintain its accounts with a scheduled bank, savings centre or post office. These accounts should be in the name of the organisation. Owing to the security situation and

procedural requirements, this may be tough to accomplish in the first instance. However, it will be of definite help in broadening the financial base and seeking further financing from organisations other than SOMOP.

- SOMOP may extend a one-time grant for the development of policy documents for BM. This will help in the continuity of the organisational policies. These measures will lead towards transforming BM from a personality-driven organisation to a sustainable organisation which continues serving vulnerable children especially girls in their pursuit of education.

#### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

##### KII for Partners, Stakeholders and Government Officials

###### Introduction:

Greeting... Thanks for taking the time to speak with us. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am representing SOMOP/ Binte Malakand. We are conducting an evaluation of the Schools Education Project; which is being implemented by Binte Malakand.

We will discuss the context, implementation and outcomes of the project. Your responses will help us to understand the situational assessment, efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of the schools in the project area.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I am about to ask. We expect to learn from your experience.

Participation in this discussion is voluntary; you can withdraw at any time or choose not to answer any question. I will be taking notes to help me remember what is said. All your comments will be kept confidential and not linked in any way to you in our reporting.

Do you agree to participate in the interview?

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department/ Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

###### Interview Questions:

1. What are the admission requirements in government schools with respect to:
  - a. Class-wise age (evidence required)
  - b. Test/ Interview
  - c. Certificate (School Leaving Certificate)
  - d. Other requirements
2. What is the class-wise fee structure in government schools?
3. What is the average class-wise cost of books and notebooks? Who bears this cost?
4. What is the average expense on uniform? Who bears these expenses?
5. How long have you known Binte Malakand and the schools being run by the organisation?
6. How are the BeM schools different from government schools?

7. What added advantage these schools are bringing to the overall education system?
8. Are the BeM schools really needed? Do you think they should be continued?
9. What improvements would you suggest in BeM schools?
10. Do you think more schools like these are needed in the area?
11. What contribution is BeM as an organization making to the education sector in the area?

Interviewer's Comments:

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## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Introduction:

Facilitator: Good morning/afternoon and welcome. Thanks for taking the time to join our discussion. My name is Javaid Iqbal and I am representing SOMOP/ Binte Malakand. We are conducting an Evaluation of Schools which are being run by Binte Malakand.

The purpose of this discussion is to talk about the interventions in area. Your responses will help us to understand the relevance, quality, and impact of the services being provided. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions I am about to ask. We expect that you may have differing points of view. Please feel free to share your opinion even if it differs from what others have said.

We would appreciate an interactive session and providing an opportunity to express views in a dignified and fair way. Participants can agree or disagree with opinions and this should be expressed in a respectful manner. Participation in this discussion is voluntary; you can withdraw at any time or choose not to answer any question. We will be taking notes to help us remember what is said. All your comments will be kept confidential and not linked in any way to you in our reporting.

Let's begin by having a round of brief introductions.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What educational facilities for your children are available in the vicinity of your village? Government as well as private schools?
2. How far is the government school available? How long does it take children of the area to reach there? What are the transportation options? How much do they cost?
3. Why didn't you admit your children to the government school? Probe on the pros and cons of government school systems.
4. What is the difference between government school, BeM school and other private schools with respect to:
  - a. Class-wise age (evidence required)
  - b. Fee structure
  - c. Books and stationary
  - d. uniform
  - e. Other requirements



5. What is community's perception of the changes and immediate impact resulting from the BeM educational activities?
6. Do you think that the BeM Schools should continue? Why/why not? (Probe: inquire what can the community do to ensure the continuity of these activities in the future)

Facilitator's Comments:

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## Picture Gallery





