

Reading performance standards approved for students in early grades

By Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: The school education and literacy department on Thursday approved Sindh's first-ever 'Reading performance standards' for students in early grades in the province, officials said.

They said the department had developed those standards with the technical support of USAID-funded Pakistan Reading Project (PRP) and Sindh Reading Programme (SRP).

"The SRP is a signature component of the Sindh Basic Education Programme (SBEP)," said an official.

Officials said the PRP was working to facilitate the process of establishing standards that defined reading performance and would serve as the foundation for comprehensive reading reform.

They said standards had been set for reading skills and grade levels for Sindhi and Urdu in the province.

An official statement by the primary education department said that after the 18th constitutional amendment that expanded the provincial autonomy, the provincial governments were obliged to develop education standards for their respective provinces.

"In compliance with the Sindh School Educational Standards and Curriculum Act No. IX of 2015, the education and lit-

eracy department has approved the Reading Performance Standards and compliance of the Sindhi and Urdu languages for the early grades from ECE (early childhood education) to grade V through a notification issued the other day," said the statement.

Officials said it was widely believed that the increased reading competence sustained enrolment, increased the retention rate and lowered dropout of learners in public educational facilities.

"Sindh is the first province in Pakistan that has developed these standards for primary schools," said an official.

"The Sindh government is stepping ahead for making educational spaces more conducive to teaching and learning."

Officials said the SRP was a five-year initiative to support SBEP's goal of improving early grade reading, learning and teaching.

They added the SRP aimed to address critical issues in early-grade reading through continuous teachers' professional development, improving assessment, distributing supplementary materials, and encouraging family participation.

The programme would directly impact 400,000 students by providing training, and resources for improving reading, teaching, learning, and assessment in grades ECE-V in selected gov-

ernment schools of five selected towns of Karachi and seven other districts elsewhere in the province.

The SRP aimed at enrolling 30,000 out-of-school children (aged three to 16 years) in non-formal and literacy programmes in the target districts.

Meanwhile, the standing committee of the SBEP for reading and teachers training programmes in Sindh met at the programme office in Karachi and reviewed progress of the SRP on the transition and integration of component's various interventions into the school education department, administered trainings and curriculum-related institutions.

Presided over by the programme director SBEP, the meeting was attended by John Pollock, education officer, USAID, and representatives from SRP, PRP, reforms support unit, Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority, Provincial Institute of Teachers Education, directorate of teachers training in Sindh, non formal education directorate and the programme team of SBEP.

The forum decided that the SRP and PRP would continue supporting the school education department on the improvement of early grade reading and assessment, non-formal education and teachers training through their respective interventions.